








LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM AND  
DEMOCRACY



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



**LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM AND  
DEMOCRACY**

# MEMOIRS OF THE DUKE DE SAINT-SIMON

TRANSLATED AND EDITED

BY

FRANCIS ARKWRIGHT

In Six volumes, handsomely bound in cloth gilt,  
gilt top. With 24 illustrations in photogravure

21s. net each volume

THESE world-famous memoirs of the court of Louis XIV have been newly translated and carefully edited by an expert—Mr. Francis Arkwright. Their author the Duke de Saint-Simon was a shrewd observer of human foibles, a keen reader of character, and the trusted friend of those in high office, through whom he was able to learn details of important affairs of State. Few books possess in like degree the charm and fascination of these records of a past regime, or can make a similar appeal to the cultured and scholarly, and the lover of racy narrative. They are very human. No incident was too trivial for Saint-Simon to record; thus there passes before the eyes of the reader a splendid pageant of the men and women who loved and fought and schemed in the gay Court of Versailles when Louis XIV was King.

*The Evening Standard*—"Well printed, tastefully bound, and illustrated with good portraits and reproductions of old engravings. A monument of publishing pluck."

*The Daily Telegraph*—"The complete work constitutes what will probably ever remain for English Libraries, private or public, the standard edition of a universally known work."

LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO., LTD.



# MEMOIRS OF THE DUC DE SAINT-SIMON

TRANSLATED BY

FRANCIS AND WRIGHT

IN TWO VOLUMES. THE FIRST VOLUME CONTAINS THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV. FROM 1643 TO 1715. THE SECOND VOLUME CONTAINS THE HISTORY OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XV. FROM 1715 TO 1774.

21s. net each volume

THE DUC DE SAINT-SIMON was one of the most distinguished statesmen and historians of France. His memoirs are a valuable source of information for the history of the reigns of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. The first volume contains the history of the reign of Louis XIV. from 1643 to 1715. The second volume contains the history of the reign of Louis XV. from 1715 to 1774. The memoirs are written in a clear and concise style, and are a valuable source of information for the history of France.

THE DUC DE SAINT-SIMON



CHRIST

*(After a drawing by Toussaint Dubreuil in  
the Louvre)*



22214 k

# LABOUR SOCIAL REFORM AND DEMOCRACY

BY  
DR. ANGELO S. RAPPOPORT

AUTHOR OF  
"A HISTORY OF EUROPEAN NATIONS," ETC.

VOL. I



212292  
18:5:27

LONDON  
STANLEY PAUL & CO., LTD.  
8 ENDSLEIGH GARDENS, UPPER WOBURN PLACE



TO MY SON  
JOSÉ LEONARD  
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS  
PAULTON, SOMERSET, ENGLAND



## PREFACE

THE whole history of humanity is a history of struggle and fight, struggle of man against nature and against his fellow-men. Nature herself is pitiless and knows neither sentimentalism nor justice, but man, through his actions, is constantly increasing the suffering and misery of those whom he ought to love, help, and succour. There is an iron law of inequality. Men are not equally endowed by nature, which in itself is a basic injustice. Fate is arbitrary, throwing the "slings and arrows of an outrageous fortune" upon one, and a *dolce far niente* into the lap of another. Gilded carriages, silken cushions, health, wealth, power, fame, and happiness for the favourites of Fortune; work, mire, starvation, misery, and slavery for the outcasts. Nature has no sense of justice; brutality and cruelty seem to inspire her with respect; "disdaining human grief, she smiles with servile homage upon the felicitous." The unequal distribution of suffering, the sudden stroke of unmerited disaster, the sudden and unequally unmerited rise to fame and fortune, the happiness of one and the suffering of another, are problems which, since time immemorial, have puzzled theologians, philosophers, and ordinary thinkers. Why is suffering necessary for man? Why have death, illness, misery, woe, and starvation been brought into the world? The answer that man must suffer so that he might become better

## PREFACE

is absurd. Only those who have never suffered could give expression to such nonsense, both from a moral and a scientific point of view. Suffering never makes man better, never elevates or ennobles man. If it were so, then the miserable sufferers, being the best and noblest, ought to rule, and the favourites of Fortune obey ; slaves ought to rule and masters obey. Besides, could not an all-powerful God make us good without compelling us to go through the ordeal of suffering ? Is it not a contradiction of His omnipotence ? But more perplexing still is the question of the *inequality of suffering*. When we see the innocent suffer and the wicked triumph and prosper, we must logically conclude that either our conceptions of good and evil differ from those of a Divine Power, a ruler of the Universe—and then all religion and morality are empty words—or that Divine justice and goodness are a myth. The goodness of God is really irreconcilable with the cruelty and injustice of nature. Every thinker who studies the history of humanity, who is not deceived by fine phrases, and who explores the innermost recesses of his consciousness, is ultimately compelled to admit to himself that he is puzzled by the flagrant injustice ruling the universe. He is struck by the apparent chaos and blind fatality of pitiless fate presiding over the destiny of man. Men have puzzled over these problems. On the shores of the mighty sea they have questioned the silent stars ; they have queried the mummies in the ancient land of the Pharaohs ; they have argued with an invisible Creator, like Job of old, but no answer has been forthcoming. “ Ein Narr wartet auf Antwort.” The agnostic shrugs his shoulders and dismisses these problems which are beyond human understanding. Religion, on the other hand, consoles man with the



## PREFACE

hope of a Beyond and of a Hereafter. There is consolation in this hope, for whilst science only explains, religion endeavours to justify. It teaches the *fatherly education theory* : " Whom God loveth He punishes " ; although the majority of men seem to prefer not to be loved of God. He who believes, however, is really happy. Instead of a fleeting happiness extending over a short span of time, he hopes to enjoy eternal bliss in a world to come. " Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. " Religion—and when I say religion I am not confining myself to one religious system in particular—goes even so far as to explain the apparent contradiction between Divine justice and benevolence and human suffering by the adoption of a theory of dual invisible forces, of two powers of good and evil. Ormuzd and Ahriman, the Persians called them. Ormuzd, or our benevolent God, had no intention whatever to send pain, woe, misery, and suffering into the world for disciplinary purposes. The benevolent Creator meant man to be happy, His purposes being wise and full of love. But Ahriman, the malignant Spirit, disturbed the harmony and is still continuing to do so. I admit that this answer is more satisfactory (to me, at least) than those given by the agnostic or by the materialist. God is not a Despot, whose will is law and who is not to be questioned when He inflicts suffering upon humanity. He is the Source of Benevolence and of loving-kindness, but His purposes are always disturbed by the counter-action and influence of the Malignant Spirit. This explanation is the more satisfactory as it admits of the theory that social and economic suffering of man is anyhow not the result of any preordination of a Superior Power, but of man's own making. Nature created neither kings nor slaves, neither rulers nor

## PREFACE

ruled, millionaires or beggars, magnates or proletarians, and the social and economic inequalities existing in the world—and which cause so much misery to millions—are the result of human selfishness, wickedness, falsehood, and—hypocrisy! If men would only honestly follow the principles of religion, not only in theory but also in practice, if Jews were to obey the command of Leviticus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour like thyself"; if Christians were not to "shove" aside with indulgent smiles the precepts preached by Christ when, on the starlit mountain, He wished to transfigure man, all economic and social suffering would disappear as if by magic. There would no longer be any necessity for men to sit by the lake of Geneva and repeat in many tongues: "Blessed are the peacemakers." Compared to the Sermon once preached on the top of the Mount in Galilee, all the sermons now preached by the side of the mountains of Switzerland sink into utter insignificance.

Whilst leaving the solution of the problem of the existence of natural and physical ill, and of the unequal distribution of happiness and sufferings, to the metaphysicians and preachers, I emphatically maintain that all social and economic sufferings and inequalities are of man's making; man who, in his selfishness, oppresses his fellow-men. I do not deny the fact, which biology has confirmed, that there is an iron law of inequality. It is, of course, a basic injustice, and however much the followers of Nietzschean aristocratic philosophy may laugh at the expression, it is an "injustice of nature." The fact nevertheless remains that Nature has distributed with a very uneven hand all the virtues and vices (ay, vices) which enable man to exercise influence and superiority over his fellow-men.



## PREFACE

Nature has distributed health and beauty, intelligence and vigour unequally and unjustly, but that is no reason why man, instead of using his gifts for the benefit of his fellow-men, should, on the contrary, avail himself of his natural superiority to rule, govern, and oppress ! And yet such has been the record of history ! Ancient and modern civilisations alike are based upon slavery and oppression of man by man. Humanity is ever divided into two classes : the exploiters and the exploited. The masters, the powerful, the favourites of Fortune, have always taken for themselves the pleasant tasks, power and wealth, and left to the others the hard work and misery. From time to time, however, men have arisen who, struck by existing inequality and economic suffering, have preached an ideal of social and economic justice. They have uttered a cry of justice and have voiced the grievances of the downtrodden and oppressed. They are the *prophets* of social and economic justice. Unfortunately, however, there are both true and false prophets. In modern times, the numerous prophets call themselves labour-leaders, or social reformers, democrats, socialists, communists, bolsheviki, syndicalists, etc., but only few among them are the prophets of the true God. The majority are false prophets, who preach the destruction of Mammon but serve Baal. They thunder against social injustice, they preach social democracy and economic equality, but in reality, instead of being inspired by lofty ideals and love of humanity, they are guided only by greed, ambition, and love of self. The true prophets never *arrive* during their lifetime. They are stoned, thrown into dens of lions, or crucified ; only after their death they are appreciated and worshipped by humanity. The true prophets of social justice are dreamers who

## PREFACE

never think of or strive after power. Inspired by religious feelings, lofty ideals, altruism, and love of humanity, they are anxious to ameliorate the condition of the suffering masses, but they never seek to rule, govern, or dictate. True benefactors of humanity, they persuade, but never try to oppress, destroy, or massacre their opponents. They appeal to the best in human nature, seeking to attain peace upon earth and goodwill among men, and thus introduce an era of real equality, social and economic. Quite different are the false prophets, who preach love and practise hate. If we were to examine the minds of such prophets, if we were to "psycho-analyse" them, we would find that they are swayed by greed, ambition, and pure, undiluted selfishness. They are more dangerous to humanity than straightforward tyrants, on account of their hypocrisy and false pretences, for they exercise tyranny in the name of liberty. They are autocrats under the cloak of democracy, exploiters of labour in the name of labour. No historian will deny the fact that many crimes have been committed in the name of religion, for the bloodstained pages of history bear witness to it. Numerous are the victims who have been offered as holocausts upon the altars of polytheism and of Judæo-Christian monotheism. In the name of the gentle Saviour of Nazareth men have preached hatred and revenge, have pitilessly massacred the aged and the feeble, helpless and innocent babes and sucklings at their mothers' breasts. But more numerous still are the crimes and horrors perpetrated (and still being perpetrated) in the name of liberty and equality. The floodgates of social revolution, in the name of liberty and equality, are "followed by a blood-smeared debauch." The fight for the emancipation of social and economic slaves, the cry for justice



## PREFACE

ends not in the liberation of the slaves, in the famous "dictatorship of the proletariat," in the rule of labour or of democracy, but in the tyranny of self-appointed leaders, in the dictatorship of unscrupulous adventurers who rule in the name of the proletariat ; the latter an abject slave. It has been pointed out by eminent authors that the aim of many social levellers is the pleasure of destruction, the annihilation of existing society for the sole pleasure of destroying. Others maintain that their aim is "the destruction of that world as a prelude to the creation of a new world of their own imagining" (Harold Cox, *Economic Liberty*). I venture to think that the aim of the leaders of many so-called social innovations is even more simple ; it can be summed up in one word : *Self*. In order to attain their ends, to satisfy their craving for domination, their will to power, they mislead the downtrodden and oppressed, the workers, the labourers, the toilers, the proletarians, the sufferers, making promises unto them which they never intend to keep. Once in power, with which the deluded wanderers in the desert of social oppression have invested them, they soon forget the promised land of liberty and equality. It turns out that by "interests of labour" they only meant their own interests ; by democracy, not the rule of democracy, but of a few clever leaders who have risen from the ranks of the people, and by the dictatorship of the proletariat—the dictatorship of the self-appointed leaders of the misguided proletariat, who remains a slave worse off than under autocracy. The surplus-value of labour only changes hands ; from the pockets of a few capitalists it gets into those of lucky labour-leaders and so-called social democrats. The innermost thought of many social and economic saviours is not that of really helping suffering

## PREFACE

humanity, but of usurping the power wielded by others. Once in possession of power, they care little for those who expected salvation from them, and are only anxious to retain the power as long as possible. It is this "will to power" which distinguishes the false from the true prophets. No one who strives after power, whether in the name of democracy or of the proletariat, is a real democrat or social reformer. It is only a case of *ôte toi que je m'y mette*.

They appeal not to the best in man, but to every motive that stimulates class-hatred. "They choose as their goal universal warfare, and, for selfish purposes, make an appeal to the passions of envy, hatred, and malice" (Harold Cox, *Economic Liberty*). Their Gospel of Social Democracy is a Gospel of Hate and not of Love, for it is only a means to an end—one end only, the satisfaction of their "will to power." Such are the false prophets. But there have also been true prophets of social justice, of economic equality, and of social democracy. These preachers of a social gospel have never striven after power, have never been anxious to occupy the seats of the mighty, to rule, govern, or dictate; to live in luxury, whilst the oppressed, for whose sake they pretend to work, are continuing to drag the chains of misery. The prophets of Israel, the early Christians, the so-called Utopian Socialists, men like Babeuf, Godwin, Thompson, Owen, *et tutti quanti*, have never dreamt of occupying exalted positions above their fellow-men, to live in royal apartments, travel in *cabines de luxe*, or sleep in beds of emperors. They were inspired by love of humanity and real pity for the suffering, downtrodden, and oppressed. How men who obviously only strive after power can dare to take the name of equality (or social justice) in vain is astonishing. The brazen lie and



## PREFACE

hypocrisy are only equalled by the stupidity of the masses who believe them, that their only aim is the emancipation of labour and the introduction of an era of social equality and of true democracy. In the following pages I have made an attempt not only to give a sketch of the history of human social and economic suffering, but also to record the ideas on labour, social reform, and democracy propounded by the Apostles of Social Justice of all ages. The present volume brings up my sketch to the first centuries of the Christian era. The next volume will be devoted to the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Renaissance, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the French Revolution, and the first half of the nineteenth century. The cry for justice has been uttered by numerous sociologists and philosophers, poets and prophets, but I am making a distinction between the true and false prophets. With the latter I am but little concerned, leaving them to the judgment of history, but from the teaching of the former, the reader, as I hope, may derive some benefit, inspiration, and consolation.

ANGELO S. RAPPOPORT

1925





# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR . . . . .	19
II. SOCIAL REFORM AND DEMOCRACY . . . . .	39
III. THE ORIENT : INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA . . . . .	49
IV. LABOUR LEGISLATION IN THE MOSAIC CODE . . . . .	67
V. THE SOCIAL GOSPEL OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS . . . . .	95
VI. LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TALMUD . . . . .	131
VII. LABOUR, DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL REFORM IN GREECE . . . . .	145
VIII. PLATO AND ARISTOTLE . . . . .	185
IX. THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CYNIC AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS . . . . .	221
X. LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME . . . . .	237
XI. THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION . . . . .	263
XII. THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY . . . . .	291
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	313
INDEX . . . . .	321

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHRIST	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
CONFUCIUS	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Facing page 60</i>
MOSES	.	.	.	.	.	„ „ 80
SOLON	.	.	.	.	.	„ „ 156
HESIOD	.	.	.	.	.	„ „ 164
SOCRATES	.	.	.	.	.	„ „ 176
PLATO	.	.	.	.	.	„ „ 192
ARISTOTLE	.	.	.	.	.	„ „ 216



# THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR



## CHAPTER I

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

**U**NDER labour we understand work produced either physically or intellectually, the effort being made with a view to producing wealth or utilities. Labour, however, is usually applied to hired labour and particularly to manual labour. It is then applied to the labouring classes, i.e. persons rather than the physical effort, or work. When I am speaking of Labour I am using the word in the sense of both work and the labouring classes—whether hired or nominally independent, as the master-artisans of mediævalism.

Labour is not only physical, but also intellectual. The common notion that only the manual labourer is working, because he alone is exerting himself physically, is wrong, from the psychological as well as from the sociological point of view.

We shall see, however, in the subsequent chapters of this book, that such was the idea common not only in India and Egypt, but also in Greece. Ancient Hellas honoured intellectual work more than physical, hence the honour paid to warriors. This idea may be due to the notion that, whilst man who is working physically only overcomes and subdues natural forces, the warrior subdues human strength.

Herodotus tells us that the Egyptians despised manual labour, and that the warriors, who, after the priests, were the most honoured caste, were not allowed to exercise any profession except that of war. "I do



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
not know," he adds, "whether the Greeks have this custom from the Egyptians, because I find it among Thracians, Scythians, Persians, and Lydians. Those who learn a mechanic art are considered as the last of the citizens."

In Sparta, we are told by Plutarch, one of the finest and happiest institutions of Lyscurgus was the provision of leisure for his fellow-citizens; he forbade them to learn any mechanic art, or to traffic laboriously and industriously to amass wealth. Both Plato and Aristotle despised manual labour.

On the other hand, in ancient Israel work and labour were glorified. From foregoing remarks it will already be seen how the ideas of man on labour and the labouring classes have differed and still continue to differ. This is due to the fact of the conception of labour being a very complex one.

According to the *milieu* to which one belongs and the function one fills in society, the words "work" and "labour" have a different meaning. Everyone judges from his own point of view, with man's eternal pretension to measure all things by his personal prejudices—his passions and his sufferings. To the manual labourer, the unskilled labourer, work is a painful physical effort, a violent muscular effort—under the scorching sun or exposed to the icy wind. "Thou shalt earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow" is for him a curse of nature or of God, and his only explanation and conception of work. He does not deny the utility of mental work, he sometimes even respects it, but he always retains the idea that *his* work is the far more painful of the two. The factory hand and the clerk, held to daily work by a narrow discipline, consider the monotony and regularity of their work as a burden heavy to bear. The con-

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

tractor and the business man consider the preoccupations, the endless anxieties, the moral shocks always in wait for them, as obstacles to the calm enjoyment of life. The scientists and men of learning complain that notoriety and fame rarely bring in their train the wealth which should crown their arduous studies and difficult research-work. Even those enjoying sinecures, when faced by the rising flood of competition, find the intrigues they are forced into to be an all-absorbing and ever-increasing and unremunerative labour. Each one talks of the disadvantages and risks of his business, exaggerates its inconveniences, and endeavours to keep his children from following in his steps—on pretext that it is the hardest and the worst-paid work. Work, therefore, presents divers manifestations, the effort of which each individual measures up by his particular standard. There results therefrom varied opinions, numerous prejudices, false impressions, encouraged by those whose intent it is to spread their ideas which have a pernicious influence on public opinion, and which often make themselves felt in the legislation of a nation or of a country.

As for the economists, looking upon labour from an economic point of view, they define it as a voluntary act determined by need. They have also noted that work means effort and suffering to man, and that man has ever tried to avoid such effort and suffering. Hence not only the mechanical law of the economy of effort, obtaining what one believes to be most advantageous by the least effort, but also the endeavour of man to throw the burden of labour upon the shoulders of his fellow-men.

It all depends, however, how we look at labour or work, whether from the psychological or the sociological point of view, for there are two aspects of labour.

# LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

## THE ASPECTS OF LABOUR—PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL

We hear of the dignity of labour and of its ennobling effect. Labour is supposed to be the living synthesis of philosophy and of theology. It aggrandises the human intelligence through the Divine verb, and elevates man to the highest summit of energy and independence; it is the highest manifestation of life, intelligence, and liberty. Homer called the man who does not work a useless burden upon earth,<sup>1</sup> whilst some of the moderns assert that a man who does not labour hurts at once the community of which he is a part and himself.<sup>2</sup>

If we were to ask an ancient slave or a modern hired labourer or wage-earner what he thinks of work and labour, he would no doubt shake his head at the idea of "elevation to the highest summit of energy and independence." Work, or labour, used in the sense of effort, he would say, is the very negation of liberty and independence. Man's ideal, he would say, is repose and contemplation, and he would, rightly too, perhaps point out the fact that those who have time to philosophise on labour are very fortunate, but for him labour means simply drudgery.

They are happy indeed, those who have the power and the means to lead an idle life, and are able not only to throw the burden of labour upon the shoulders of the oppressed, but also to usurp the greatest part of the fruit of the latter's labour.

An educated man, an intellectual worker, would reply that in various languages the word "labour"

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, xviii, v. 104.

<sup>2</sup> J. Simon, *Le Travail*, 1866.



## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

is etymologically connected with the idea of *suffering*, *unpleasantness*, and *fatigue*.<sup>1</sup> Ethnographers have corroborated this idea when they assert that primitive nations are happiest when they are idle, and that they abhor labour of any kind

Now labour can be considered under two aspects, viz. the psychological and the sociological. By nature man is rather inclined to laziness and to contemplation, to inertia and repose, and every effort which he makes is unpleasant to him and connected with a painful feeling. But from time to time he feels the necessity to discharge the nervous force accumulated in his psychical centres. The majority of savage and primitive people are, therefore, inclined to idleness, and would rather die than work. And yet—these same savages may be very active, and usually show this activity in dancing and riding. Savages are known to dance for hours, until, quite exhausted, fainting and gasping they fall to the ground. Riding is another passion of savage nations who have already entered into some relation with civilised peoples. It is evident, therefore, that, although inclined to idleness, indolence, and repose, man, even the savage, requires activity, physical or intellectual, and that under the stimulus of certain excitements he becomes exceedingly active; in some way or another he works and labours. It is, therefore, not the muscular fatigue that he shuns, for he generally chooses the activity which involves the most fatigue, namely, dancing, riding, hunting and war. In civilised countries we also see men, who have worked eight hours in a factory, go for a bicycle-ride, for a long walk, or play football, in order to relax their muscles and have a little recreation.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cohn, *System der Nationalökonomie*, vol. i, pp. 195, 253.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Psychologically, therefore, the objection of man to work is due not so much to the muscular fatigue but to the mental effort it involves, and to the regularity, the monotony, and the methodicity it requires. Where work is more automatic, and consequently requires a lesser degree of mental and of volitive effort, the work becomes more attractive, and serves to give an issue for the nervous strength accumulated in the psychical centres.

Many, therefore, prefer Alpine climbing, football, and other strenuous efforts to an activity where the quantity of intellectual and volitive effort is much greater. The *horror laboris* is due not to the physical fatigue and the muscular exertion, but to the mental effort which disturbs the state of mental inertia wherein man is happy and inclined by nature in his savage state. The higher a man is differentiated, the higher he rises in the scale of civilisation, the more honour he attaches to work, the more also he appreciates and finds pleasure in an intellectual effort and has a contempt for all automatic work. In the less-differentiated man, on the contrary, the desire for violent muscular stimuli and excitements is strong and pleasant. This explains why primitive man preferred war to agriculture, and why the lower-differentiated man in modern times prefers football to study. There is a feeling of pleasure and relaxation in the transition from work requiring constant application, mental effort, intellectual and volitive, to some work, more intense, more fatiguing, but requiring only a muscular effort. This change produces a feeling of pleasure and an agreeable sensation. "The utility and the power of attraction of sport," writes W. Ferrero,<sup>1</sup> consist in the fact that they give us an opportunity of

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Scientifique*, tome v, 1896, p. 335.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

exercising our muscles and discharging the accumulated nervous forces without compelling us to make an intense mental effort. Laziness, craving after indolence, and inertia are the result of physical causes, and not of man's repugnance for physical exertion."

Sociologically, labour has been defined as "continuous activity for the purpose of exercising an operation with a view to a certain and determined end."<sup>1</sup> Labour has thus a certain purpose which is the production of wealth, or all that which tends to ameliorate the conditions of life. It is necessary for the welfare of the community, because the wealth yielded by nature without man's activity is very small.

Economically, the idea of labour is connected with an effort, and is an activity which culminates in a useful result, supplying the necessities of existence, either physical or intellectual. The labourer who goes to the field, the working-man who goes to the factory, the wage-earner who goes to his office or warehouse, the shopkeeper opening his shop, all work. On the contrary, dancing at a ball, playing lawn-tennis or football, are not considered work or labour, although both occupations involve a considerable effort.

The majority of economists maintain that labour is something which man is compelled to do, but which he would rather not.<sup>2</sup> Others hold a different view. "The world is a vast factory," writes J. Simon, "where we all work for a common purpose, and it is that work alone which constitutes the greatness of man and of the workers."<sup>3</sup>

The famous sociologist, C. Bücher,<sup>4</sup> differs in his views from the majority of economists. He maintains

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Say, *Traité*, book i, ch. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Gide, *Histoire des doctrines économiques*, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> J. Simon, *Le Travail*, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup> C. Bücher, *Arbeit und Rhythmus*.



that idleness is not inherent in human nature. Had this been the case, man would not have risen above the state of a fruit-gathering and root-digging animal, and not developed that civilisation which is the pride and glory of humanity. The existence of the robber class, says Bücher, is no proof that man has ever been lazy and idle. Had there been no industrious people, the robbers would have found little to rob. As for slavery, in the beginning of human society master and servant worked side by side—both equally industriously. It is only in the course of the development of civilisation that man decided to exploit his fellow-man and to usurp the fruits of the labour of the workers.

Bücher further maintains that the savages are capable of producing the same amount of labour as the civilised workers, only in a less regular and continuous way. Their labour is not felt as a burden, and is done voluntarily. There is, on the contrary, innate in man, an impulse to produce and to be active, which may best be observed in the child. So long, however, as this spending of activity is play, the healthy child would feel neither fatigue nor objection. It is the monotonous, continuous work which produces a disinclination to work. It is upon this impulse to activity that Fourier based his communistic system and the plan of his phalanstères.<sup>1</sup>

Now, without contradicting the existence of the *horror laboris* in a number of men, I think that healthy man, especially civilised man, is in reality inclined to activity and not to laziness, as, for instance, Lafargue pretends.<sup>2</sup> Sociologically, the *horror laboris* is due not so much to innate laziness as to a craving for *liberty, equality, and social justice*.

<sup>1</sup> C. Bücher, loc. cit., p. 9

<sup>2</sup> Lafargue, *Le droit à la paresse*.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

Etymologically, work and labour convey the idea of some obstacle which we come across in the exercise of our activities, and the effort consists in our having to overcome some resistance. There is thus a struggle, a fight, between man and the world surrounding him, between man and nature, and man enjoys fight and the prospect of victory. He enjoys it, however, as long as he is a free agent, master of his own actions.

It is the sentiment of having to work for material requirements, the struggle and uncertainty of life, the feeling of *dependence*, which makes work of the hired labourer and of the wage-earner so hard. It is the feeling of injustice and of an absence of equality. Physically, the man who is turning a wheel in a factory is making, perhaps, a much smaller effort than the employer for whom he is working, and who is at the very moment playing football, or climbing the Alps. The fact, however, remains that the one is working and the other is not. Add to it the injustice of one man usurping the largest portion of another man's labour, physical or intellectual, and we have the great question of social justice in a nutshell.

Be this as it may, however, whether man is by nature inclined to laziness or not, the historical fact remains that ever since the dawn of history one class of men have thrown the burden of labour upon the shoulders of their less fortunate fellow-men and reaped the benefit. Slavery, serfdom, industrial labourers, and a proletariat were the result. Humanity gradually evolved into two classes; a class of idle rich and exploiters, and the labouring and exploited classes.

As soon as society evolved from the nomadic to the agricultural state and settled down, the idea was gradually conceived that, instead of killing the vanquished enemy, it would be more advantageous to

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
make him prisoner and let him work for the victor. Thus a social differentiation between masters and slaves arose, and it was soon followed by an economic differentiation of rich and poor. The masters selected for themselves the pleasant and honourable tasks, leaving the drudgery and ungrateful labours for the slaves, serfs, and all the unfree and oppressed.<sup>1</sup>

Slavery may be considered as a parallel to the domestication of animals. The slave was looked upon as nothing more than a domesticated animal, an idea which has become so innate and inherent in humanity and so hereditary in the ruling classes that even in a democratic age, one frequently connects this notion with all dependents and even the working-classes who minister to the wants of the leisured classes. Domesticated animals, descendants of ancient slaves, that is what the leisured classes think in their hearts of the proletariat, manual or intellectual.

Thus, primitive man, instead of consuming the enemy and appeasing his hunger, found it more advantageous to use the former's power for work. It was a progress in so far that the enemy was no longer treated as a wild and pernicious, but as a domestic, animal. Language has preserved the idea in the word "domestics," equivalent to servant.

Domestication of wild animals and domestics are philologically-related terms. The arrangement of letting the captured enemy work instead of killing him proved an advantage for both the victor and the vanquished. The prisoner of war preferred a life of work to swift death. Man had thus gained a glimpse of the mystery of capital, namely, the policy of letting others work for him. Scientists speak of the Darwinian survival of the fittest. Economists bluntly

<sup>1</sup> Muller-Lyer, *Phasen der Kultur*, 1908, p. 148.



## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

affirm that this utilisation by man of the labour of his fellow-man is the first step in the development of civilisation and culture, because leisure is the *sine qua non* of all mental functions. But if such is the case, the price paid for culture has been a very high one. Slavery has enabled man to become what he is—master and a thinker. Such, of course, was the fundamental idea of the Greeks.

No one will deny that society, for its development, has to utilise all the powers of its members. It must, however, be done in such a way that the distribution of both labour and compensation should be adequate and just. Humanity cannot count upon a life without work, as long as parsimonious Nature has not changed into a Garden of Eden before the fall, showering gifts without toil of man. No social revolution, no Labour or Socialist Government, no social reforms will ever effect a state of society where man will enjoy life without labour. No social redeemer, no labour Samson, will ever be able to break the yoke of labour from the neck of humanity and save it from the necessity of working. But what he can do is to make this yoke softer, the necessity less urgent, by distributing, not acquired wealth, but equality of work and compensation, by pulling down the barriers of rank and position, by making men socially democratic, by introducing what men like Clynes and Henderson call Christian ideals.<sup>1</sup>

To say that the contrast between the misery of the working-classes, the lowly and the oppressed, and the splendour of the upper classes is a result of natural selection is an absurdity and an injustice. To imagine that the survival of the fittest means the survival of

<sup>1</sup> I hope I shall be permitted to add the ideals of the Hebrew prophets, of Amos and Isaiah—and their successor, Jesus of Nazareth.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

those industriously superior, of those who are better constituted to comply with the exigencies of society, is erroneous. The exigencies of society may be such that the most adaptable is he whose faults will adapt themselves to the social *milieu*, and the most adaptable elements will sometimes be the worst elements—the moral monsters.

To the Conservative die-hards, basing themselves upon the theory of the survival of the fittest, finding justification for the present state of society in this formula, we point to Soviet Russia. In reality, however, that shadow, namely labour and misery, on the one side and leisure and wealth on the other, is not the result of nature and selection, but of social injustice. It is a creation of man and can be altered by man. The power of adaptation may be ethically indifferent, and even antimoral.

The real survival of the fittest can only be realised in a society where all have to work, where everyone is given an opportunity of developing his faculties and is not handicapped by any social or economic restrictions. In a word, in a society based upon democratic principles.

To sum up : man, in his struggle with nature, tried to subdue its forces. At first, the stronger compelled the weaker to work, namely children, women, and prisoners, and in exchange for their labours he gave them food, shelter, and protection. That is the origin of society.<sup>1</sup>

With the advancement and development of society, with progress, the strong man reaped all the advantages, his task of granting protection diminished, nay, it was quite the reverse. As civilisation progressed, the lord and the master looked for protection to those whom he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Schaeffle, *Bau des sozialen Körpers*.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

exploited and compelled to work for him ; he relied on the so-called feeble classes, or working classes. On the other hand, the productiveness of labour increased, and the astute strong man took all the profits—no work and a life of leisure—leaving to the slaves and their modern descendants all the work. He hired philosophers and economists to silence the voices of the prophets and poets who thundered against social injustice. The former maintained that such a state was absolutely necessary for the welfare of the community, and that—thanks to the labour of one class and the leisure of another—civilisation could be developed. That the first phases of civilisation required slavery as an institution is a point of view which has been, and is still, defended by many social philosophers.<sup>1</sup> “Keine Kultur ohne Dienstboten,” Treitschke once wrote. The fourth estate, therefore—the modern proletariat—is not an innovation, but dates from antiquity.

India had her Sûdras, Sparta her Helots, Athens her Thetes, Rome her slaves, mediæval Germany her Hörige, Russia her “souls,” just as the modern capitalistic society has its industrial bondmen and wage-earners.<sup>2</sup>

Now, I admit that in the interests of the community all should work and produce. But I emphatically deny, in spite of economists and social philosophers, that it is in the interests of the community for one man or a group of men to throw the burden of labour upon the shoulders of others. It is certainly a grave social injustice for one man, or group of men, to reap the fruits and the product of the labour of others. It is an elementary transgression of justice to allow individuals or classes to live on the produce of the labour of

<sup>1</sup> See L. Stein, *Die Soziale Frage*, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> See Rossbach, *Geschichte der Gesellschaft*, vol. vi, p. 2.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

other classes. "An idle and begging nobility," writes J. Simon, "paying nothing, receiving everything, despising the people and living upon the labour of others, this phenomenon would appear incomprehensible had it not been so universal and lasted less time."<sup>1</sup> I add that a leisured class of capitalists, of idle rich, living in luxury on the labour of men who work, of a proletariat, is a phenomenon both incomprehensible and universal. It is a social injustice to throw the burden of work upon the shoulders of one class and to usurp all, or at least the greatest part, of the fruits of this work ; it is a social injustice to despise manual labour and to have a smile of superiority for those who are compelled to earn their living in the sweat of their brow ; it is a social injustice for some men to live in luxury, whilst others lack bread or work.

Unfortunately, however, the whole history of humanity is the history of exploitation of man by his fellow-men. It is the history of a perpetual struggle. First the struggle for existence, when all were equal, and then the struggle for a privileged existence. "It is a struggle accompanied by unspeakable misery and degradation for millions."<sup>2</sup>

The whole history of humanity gradually became the history of the enslavement of the weaker man by the stronger, and of the revolt of the oppressed against his oppressors. "The double thread of exploitation and revolt against exploitation runs through history," writes Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald.<sup>3</sup>

The history of humanity is the history of the struggle of class against class, or rather of the masses against the classes, of slaves against masters, of plebeians against patricians, of workmen against capitalists, of

<sup>1</sup> J. Simon, loc. cit., p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> See Kirkup, *Primer of Socialism*, 3rd edition, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> J. Ramsay MacDonald, *The Socialist Movement*, p. 17.

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

proletarians against idle rich, and of democracy against aristocracy.

To the inequality of Nature—which seems to be aristocratic in her designs—men have added artificial, or let us say social, inequalities. The strong have proclaimed themselves superior and have oppressed the lowly, weak, and poor. They have done it either in the name of Divine right, or in the name of civilisation and the welfare of the community.

The subjection of man by man, be it noted, has not existed to this day without any means other than force. In all ages, men have not hesitated to justify their action theoretically, and certainly this justification was easy to find. We know, as a matter of fact, without analysing history, that true progress has always been accomplished by men living in society and putting upon others the burden of all or part of the work necessary to their existence. If, therefore, the progress of civilisation is really the sole aim of humanity, then one must conclude that the distinction between necessary work, voluntary work, and leisure attributed to two distinct classes constitutes the very foundation of all progress. But if this division of attributes is fully justified by the favoured classes, from the universal scientific point of view in regard to social grouping as much as from that relating to those privileged to benefit from manual labour, one must not expect similar approbation on the part of the sacrificed classes. The idea of universal future happiness can never replace an actual personal happiness—for ever lost. Man—belonging to the privileged class—may be tempted to assimilate the work of the slave to that of natural forces and henceforth consider the latter as possessing no rights. But these legal fictions can never be anything but fictions upheld in the interests of a privileged class.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

They will never deceive anyone, the master even less than the slave.

Man is endowed with three types of faculties—those of spirit, body, and soul. He received them in divers and unequal degree, as compared not only with each other, but with those of other people. I admit that there is no more visible or incontestable fact than the natural inequality of men, in regard to their moral, intellectual, and physical faculties. Moral instruction, education, cultivation of the mind and care of the body may sometimes modify the considerable difference between one man and another, but they can never completely destroy it. All this is conceded even by the apostles of liberty, equality, and social justice, although dreamers, like Cabet,<sup>1</sup> have denied it.

The philosophers, who judge everything by the light of reason, are all agreed upon this fundamental point of the native inequality of man. But let it be understood that, though the inequality of man is of nature, nothing authorises man to increase it by human acts.

Thus legislators inspired by a feeling of justice have always endeavoured to assure the equality of all men in the eyes of the law.

When Descartes writes his *Méthode*, when Newton discovers the law of gravitation, and Kepler those which bear his name, when Cuvier, with a fragment of bone, reconstructs integrally the skeleton of some prehistoric animal and founds comparative anatomy on an indestructible basis, when a doctor gives his services to the poor gratuitously, they have an incontestable right to public admiration and gratitude. But from the point of view of social justice, they have done no more work than the humble workman who, bent all day over his work, has honestly given all he

<sup>1</sup> Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*.



## THE PHILOSOPHY OF LABOUR

could to his labour. All these men, so differently endowed, have employed in divers ways their various moral, spiritual, and physical faculties. All have done what they could. I admit that the inequality of mind and of strength, of the inequality of aptitude for work, results in the diversity of professions and of economic and social position. But I deny—paradoxical as it may sound—that all work has not the same intrinsic social value, that all service rendered, public and private, is not equal, and that therefore all service has not the right to equal remuneration and equal consideration.

This rigorous equity which society owes to all and each of its members—unequally endowed by nature—is all the more indispensable in that, from this native inequality of men with each other, there results as an inevitable consequence an inequality of conditions. But the social and economic inequality of man is not always due to natural causes, but to the constitution of society.

To the honour of humanity, however, it must be said that it has never lacked men “upon the tablets of whose hearts and minds” the love of truth and social justice, of love for their suffering fellow-men were or are still engraved. Humanity has always produced men who “fear God, are men of truth, and hate Mammon.”<sup>1</sup> Poets and prophets and social reformers of all ages have “challenged the very fundamentals of the social life of their time.”

Visions of, and plans for, social reform, for equality of men, for an amelioration of the lot of the oppressed and the lowly classes, have arisen in such men’s minds, as soon as they were impressed with existing social evils. We find that in all epochs, from the dawn of

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xviii. 21 ; see also J. Singer, *Social Justice*, p. 15.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

history, down to modern times, the protest against oppression and inequality, against social injustice, has been uttered by men. The cry for justice has resounded like a bugle-call throughout the ages. Social reformers have thundered against the wealthy and the oppressors who lived on the labour of the oppressed, and have either appealed to the better nature of man, or elaborated minute economical programmes and a new order of society, wherein all social and economic inequalities would be swept away. They have pleaded and still continue to plead for social justice, social reform, and democracy.

They brought a social message to humanity and preached a social gospel.

SOCIAL REFORM AND DEMOCRACY





## CHAPTER II

### SOCIAL REFORM AND DEMOCRACY

WE have seen in the foregoing chapter that ever since man began to live in society, in clans and nations, the clash of interests has made itself felt. Man is a political animal according to Aristotle, and a social animal according to St. Thomas Aquinas, but, as we are told in the Bible, he is also a selfish animal. "The spirit of man is bad from the beginning." This clash of interests is symbolically indicated in Genesis in the story of Cain and Abel, and it became more acute as civilisation progressed. It developed into a fierce struggle, into a jealousy of man against his fellow-man, and ultimately into class hatred. The antagonism is only too comprehensible. It is the result of the natural inequality of man. To mitigate this antagonism, to protect the weak from the oppression of the strong, men living in society made written laws. These laws, they imagined, would enable them to live in harmony. In these laws lay their hope of a peaceful and prosperous development of the race.

But, alas ! the first laws (and the practice has been repeated until the present day) were, as Comte rightly pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the expression of interest, of the prejudices of the influential party. Spencer, too, remarked that all laws have been made for the benefit of those who voted them. The first laws of antiquity were mostly

<sup>1</sup> Comte, *Traité de Législation*.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
in favour of the privileged classes, the propertied classes, as against the poor, the labouring and proletarian classes. They were the laws of the masters imposed upon the slaves.

In the ancient Orient, in Egypt, China, and India, in Hellas and in Rome, laws were early promulgated, but these laws were either based on the system of caste, i.e. absolute social inequality, on slavery and forced labour, or on artificial democracy. Moreover, labour was held in contempt ; the labourer was degraded, and agriculture was despised. From time to time, however, men arose whose aim was to adjust the crying social injustice, to preach democracy as against aristocracy, and to proclaim the dignity of labour. They preached the Gospel of Labour and of Social Justice.

These men, intoxicated with the love of humanity, urged, or really introduced, laws based upon social justice, social equality and social democracy.

But what is social democracy ? We are told that " Democracy is the only form of State ultimately tolerable." <sup>1</sup> By democracy one usually understands a " form of Government." <sup>2</sup> Such was the opinion of Sir Henry Maine, and has been shared by numerous other writers.

Democracy has been defined as the rule of many ; it is opposed to oligarchy, the rule of the few, of a class of the privileged either by birth or property, or the rule of one, as in monarchy.

" There are many mansions in the house of Democracy." Whilst for some democracy is a political conception, the rule of the many as against the rule of the few, the rule of Demos ; for others, who

<sup>1</sup> Hearnshaw, *Democracy at the Crossways*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Henry Maine, *Early Law and Custom*.



## SOCIAL REFORM AND DEMOCRACY

interpret history only economically, it is connected with industrialism. But Professor Hearnshaw has clearly shown that there is a distinction between State and Society, and between political and what we call social democracy, or the democratisation of society. "Social democracy," he writes, "is an assertion of the supreme spiritual dignity and moral worth of each individual member of the human race, irrespective of accidents of birth and place, irrespective even of difference of character and ability."<sup>1</sup> It was this conception of social democracy which constituted the rock foundation of the teaching of the Hebrew prophets, of primitive Christianity, of the Stoic philosophers, and of many modern philosophers and social reformers, as will be shown in the subsequent pages of this book. Considered from this angle of vision, *social democracy is based upon ethical and religious and not solely upon economic laws.*

It has been asserted that the masses strive above all after liberty. "Not equality but liberty is the master passion of our race."<sup>2</sup> And again: men may dream of equality, but their passionate striving is for liberty.<sup>3</sup> Men are supposed to be craving for personal differences and distinctions, and to be animated by a desire to prove themselves not equal to, but superior to, their fellow-men. This desire is at the basis of the institution of private property. Such a statement, however, may be true only as far as the privileged classes are concerned. What the masses, the proletarians, are striving after is *equality*. The love of equality is stronger in the *demos* than the love of liberty. "We can imagine a nation," writes Bryce, "which had

<sup>1</sup> Hearnshaw, loc. cit., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> John Corbin, *The Return of the Middle Classes*, 1922, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
enjoyed both, parting less reluctantly with liberty  
than with equality."<sup>1</sup>

The poor and proletarians never enjoy liberty, because they do not enjoy equality. They may be free in theory, but they are unfree in reality. Freedom is only for the rich. What the poor require is equality, because equality forcibly leads to liberty. Liberty is the ideal of the rich, as they are above equality, and no longer require it. Liberty is the ideal of the aristocracy, whilst equality is the ideal of democracy. The rich and leisured classes always dream and fight for liberty, but the toiling masses, the democracy, have always fought and will continue to fight for equality. Liberty without equality results in the oppression of one class by another.

Liberty, political liberty without equality is an empty word. Rightly writes Reynauld: "Pourquoi ces citoyens ne sent ils pas personnellement libres? Parce qu'il y a qui pressés par la faim, se voient forcés de se vendre au premier marché, qu'ils rencontrent. Ces hommes, je le répète, ne sont pas personnellement libres."<sup>2</sup>

The feeling of freedom, instead of making the masses happy, on the contrary makes them reflect upon the anomaly of inequality, especially economic inequality. It is political democracy which renders men conscious of the absence of social democracy. The slave never doubts the superiority of his master—he only dreams of freedom and escape; the salaried labourer and wage-earner, in a political democracy, questions the reasons and justice of social and economic inequality. Herein lies the greatest danger for the wealthy and powerful classes. It is not the liberty, the political

<sup>1</sup> J. Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, vol. i, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Reynauld, *Nouvelle Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Bourgeoisie."

## SOCIAL REFORM AND DEMOCRACY

liberty, they grudge, but the request for true democracy, perfect equality, and social justice.

It follows that class-war and dictatorship of the proletariat are not true social democracy or democratisation of society. The essence of democracy, wrote Schérer, is equality.<sup>1</sup> The postulate of social democracy being equality, a gospel of class-war is diametrically opposed to true democracy. Neither the Hebrew prophets nor primitive Christianity, who both breathe a spirit of social democracy, ever preached class-war. Greece, therefore, was not a democracy at all. Politically it may have been a democracy, but socially it never was, for the Athenian Constitution was based on slavery. It was the rule of an oligarchy with a contempt for labour and the labouring classes. Rightly, wrote Rousseau, "Athènes n'était point en effet une démocratie, mais une aristocratie très tyrannique, gouvernée par des savants et des orateurs."<sup>2</sup>

Neither is Soviet Russia really a democracy, for all social programmes which postulate a class-hatred are not only not synonymous with social democracy, but are directly opposed to it. They only preach the substitution of the rule of one class for another. True social democracy insists upon equality of men and the reconciliation of classes.<sup>3</sup> Scientific socialists call all men who have given expression to such conceptions of social democracy Utopians. But the Utopians understood that the doctrine of class-hatred, the substitution of the rule of the exploited to that of the exploiters, only meant the changing of the proletarians of to-day into the oppressors of to-morrow.

<sup>1</sup> E. Schérer, *La Démocratie et la France*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Rousseau, *Économie politique*.

<sup>3</sup> See Lagardelle, *Le Socialisme Ouvrier*.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

They knew that it would only lead to a *transvaluation of values*.

To sum up: true democracy means more than political liberty. The word does not, as Bryce says, denote only a form of government, but has a social and moral meaning.<sup>1</sup> It connotes equality *and* liberty. It presupposes not only political but also economic and, above all, moral issues. It is based upon the ideas of both natural and human rights. The aim of social democracy is the desire to redress social and economic grievances, and to introduce an era of social justice.

True democracy, social democracy, is moral and religious; it therefore appeals to the human emotions as much, if not more, as to reason, and its transcendental actions have since time immemorial commended it to humanity.

True democracy means the introduction of an era when men would work not out of interest or any compulsion, but simply because they would desire the welfare of others, of the whole community. Such is the social democracy of the Hebrew prophets and of primitive Christianity, as will be shown in subsequent chapters. It presupposes an era when, perfect equality and liberty having been introduced, the sense of altruism will be so great that selfish propensities will disappear. It is this ideal, this vision, one might say, which always made suffering humanity listen to the gospel of social democracy, for only emotional and moral elements can give to social democracy its explosive force. Divested of these elements, all plans for social reform must fail. "The feeling that man is lifted to a higher plane, where equality is proclaimed as an indefeasible right, gives it a magic power."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, loc. cit., p. 23.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

## SOCIAL REFORM AND DEMOCRACY

It is this conception of democracy which has been preached by all true lovers of humanity, by all those who felt pity for the suffering masses. The conceptions may have varied according to the historical period, to the ideas of the nations and their state of culture and civilisation, but the fundamentals, the essentials have always been the same. The keynote has always been moral or religious. It has always been the same whether the gospel was preached in the Orient, in Hellas or Rome, in Judæa, during the Renaissance, or in the eighteenth and the present centuries. It has always been the same whether taught by Buddha, the Stoic philosophers, the prophets of Israel, primitive Christianity, or by men who are called Utopian or integral socialists.

As long as humanity has not fully grasped and assimilated the idea of the brotherhood and fellowship of man, the idea that all men are equal, that one man is as good as another, there can be no true social democracy. As long as we have not democratised society, preached the dignity of labour, whether physical or intellectual, *as long as we have not fused into one economics and ethics, there can be no true democracy.*

The working-man, no matter what wages he can command, will always be looked upon as an inferior being, and labour, whether performed for one man or for a group, will be equivalent to slavery. There may be a slight economic amelioration for the proletariat, but there never will be true social democracy. All social reform must therefore begin with reforming man, by interiorising the social message, by appealing to the better part of humanity. Before altering laws, we must reform society, and before reforming society we must reform the soul of man. "The

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
soul of all improvement is the improvement of the  
soul."<sup>1</sup>

Only then will the bugle-call, the cry for justice, find an echo in the hearts of many. It is such a cry for justice that has been uttered, such a plea for social equality and social democracy that has been pronounced by the social reformers, prophets, poets, philosophers, and sociologists of all ages and of all nations. To the pleading of these men the following pages will be devoted.

<sup>1</sup> Horace Bushnell, quoted by Hearnshaw loc. cit., p. 430.



THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

“ Do thine allotted task !  
Work is more excellent than idleness ;  
The body's life proceeds not, lacking work.  
There is a task of holiness to do,  
Unlike work—binding toil, which bindeth not  
The faithful soul ; such earthly duty do  
Free from desire, and thou shalt well perform  
The heavenly purpose.

“ Worship the gods thereby ;  
The Gods shall yield thee grace. Those meats ye crave  
The gods will grant to Labour, when it pays  
Tithes in the altar-flame. But if one eats  
Fruits of the earth, rendering to kindly Heaven  
No gift of toil, that thief steals from his world.”

“ BHAGAVAD-GITA ”

(Sir E. Arnold's translation.)

## CHAPTER III

### THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

**I**T is usual for historians of philosophical and moral ideas to start with Greece, this country having been the cradle of philosophy and science and of civilisation in general. They seem, however, to forget that Greece has been preceded by the Orient, and that Egypt, China, India, Persia, and Judæa deserve study and consideration.

Philosophical, political, and social ideas occupied the minds of thinkers since time immemorial in the East, and the social problems which modern civilisation has raised were not unknown to the legislators and sages of past ages. Whilst, however, Greece and Rome, and modern Europe since the Renaissance, have drawn a line of demarcation between religious and secular problems, in the East, philosophical and social questions were always intimately connected with religion, and discussed in the guise of religion.

Hindu religion is known to us in two forms, Brahmanism and Buddhism. India is considered the cradle of mysticism, and it is from India that mysticism penetrated into other countries and passed to the nations of Asia and Europe. In spite, however, of mysticism and a life of contemplation, even the ancient Hindus were aware of the fact that life means strife and action, and presupposes human inequality and human laws to mitigate too flagrant injustice.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

In the laws of ancient Brahmanism we find but little sympathy with the toilers and the proletarians. There are—let us be just—certain general ideas of a rudimentary social justice which were developed in later ages and by other nations. The principles of Brahmanic social justice are to be found in the laws of *Manu*. They are characterised by a certain tendency towards benevolence and gentleness, or love for man and animals. There is an admirable tenderness for all living creatures, and especially for the weak and the feeble. There is pity for misery, coupled with respect, and even a cult of weakness, sentiments quite rare in Greek and Roman antiquity.<sup>1</sup>

Manu urges the Brahmans to use “sweet and gentle speech,” not to show bad humour, even though in pain; not to do anything to injure others, even in thought; never to utter a word which could hurt anybody, and would close for the Brahmana the entry into Heaven.<sup>2</sup> He promises heavenly bliss to those who are liberal, gentle, and patient, and who do no injury to living creatures.<sup>3</sup> He enjoins the wealthy Brahmana to find employment for and thus support both a Kshatriya or a Vaisya who are in want of a job, by employing them in suitable work.<sup>4</sup> In spite, however, of these sentiments, of the rudiments of social justice, there is no question of social equality in the laws of Manu. The ancient Hindu lawgiver is still under the influence of the idea of caste, of class-difference, and of inequality existing among men. He is an upholder of that doctrine which antiquity and mediævalism adhered to—the doctrine of caste. Manu

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paul Janet, *Histoire de la Science Politique dans ses rapports avec la morale*, vol. i, p. 8. Paris, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> Laws of Manu, ii. 161.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., iv. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., viii. 411.

## THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

is firmly convinced that not all men have been created in the image of God, a belief which is still deeply rooted in the hearts of millions of men. The most rabid socialist of modern times, the most ardent democrat, as soon as he succeeds in the world and occupies the seats of the mighty, unconsciously—and very frequently even consciously—feels that he is made of different clay from his fellow-men. Nature, which seems to be aristocratic in her designs, and consequently unjust, has made men unequal, physically and morally.

Nowhere, however, has this idea of inequality been so deeply rooted in the human heart as in India, the classic soil of caste and class. Manu thus never dreams of raising his voice against the institution of caste, which he considers to be of Divine origin.

The Brahmanas, or caste of priests, proceeded from the mouth of Brahma; the Kshatriyas, or caste of warriors, from his arms; the Vaisyas, or caste of merchants and labourers, from his thighs; and the Sûdras, or slaves, from his feet.<sup>1</sup> To these castes, according to their Brahmanic origin and birth-place, different occupations are assigned. Thus the Brahmanas teach and study, the Kshatriyas protect the people, the Vaisyas till the ground, tend the cattle, and trade, whilst to the Sûdras is assigned the duty of "serving meekly their betters, or the other three castes."<sup>2</sup> We shall see, in a subsequent chapter, that this idea, more philosophically, has been expressed by Aristotle, and even adopted by Plato in his *Republic*.

This inequality, to which Manu ascribes Divine origin, is complete: physically, morally, socially, and economically. Rank, power, wealth, and even virtues,

<sup>1</sup> The Laws of Manu, translated by G. Bühler (*The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxv. i. 31, 87, Oxford).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-91; see also Janet, loc. cit., p. 11.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

are not equally distributed by an omniscient, omnipotent ruler of the universe. Privileges on the one side, duties and work on the other. Whilst, however, the Vaisyas, or the merchants, still enjoy the duty of studying the *Veda*, of offering sacrifices, and of bestowing gifts, the poor Sûdras, the stepchildren of Nature, or of Brahma, are denied even the consolation of worship and of sacrifice. They are truly "poor in spirit," "expressing something contemptible."<sup>1</sup> Thus the doctrine of Manu, which frequently breathes a spirit of love, of tenderness for the weak, for the feeble and the lowly, is nevertheless an insolent theocracy and an oppressive monarchy, based upon the idea of the Divine right of the rulers and the obedience and servitude of the labouring classes and the slaves, as preordained by the benevolent, *self-existent* divinity.

It was Buddha, the contemporary of Pythagoras and of Confucius, of Nehemiah and of Esra, who preached the gospel of social justice—and of those ideas which I have termed social democracy—in India. Revolting against the caste system and the inequality which it presupposed, Cakya Muni, the Enlightened One, both an iconoclast and a master-builder, protested against theocracy, tyranny, and oppression. It was a mighty protest, attacking the idea of human inequality and preaching in its stead the gospel of perfect equality and the democratisation of society. Buddhism has, therefore, been rightly called the "Protestantism of India." Although a moral, not a political reformer, although he only insisted upon spiritual and religious and not upon social equality, Buddha nevertheless undermined the very foundations of Brahmanic inequality.

<sup>1</sup> The Laws of Manu, II. 31, 32. See also VIII. 414, where Manu declares that a Sûdra emancipated by his master is still a slave, for no one can set him free from what is in him.



## THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

But if Buddha preached the gospel of equality in the sphere of religion, and promulgated a *spiritual* social democracy, he disdained to devote his attention to things mundane. Civic virtues and economic questions did not interest this prophet of democracy. The goods of this world were as naught compared to the goods eternal. Intent upon turning men into saints, Buddha entirely neglected the idea of making citizens. According to the doctrine of Brahmanism, science, study, devotion, and salvation were the exclusive patrimony of the Brahmins, whilst even the warriors had to be satisfied with the religious food meted out to them by these favoured ones.

Cakya Muni wished to make the happiness of religion accessible to all men. "In my religion," said he, "there is no distinction between rich and poor, between Brahmanas and Sûdras." Man, in his greed, his selfishness, and his deeply-rooted egotism, always usurps the things which the age in which he lives values most. These possessions may be either material or spiritual. In a country and in an age where the highest value is attached to material possessions and economic goods, the stronger man will usurp these goods to the detriment and even complete exclusion of his weaker fellow-men. In a country or in an age where the moral, spiritual or ideal possessions are more highly valued, the rulers and strong ones will claim the lion's share in these coveted possessions. As either materialism or spiritualism will prevail and exercise sway upon the human mind, the oppressors, the rulers, the strong and powerful will attribute to themselves either heaven or earth. In an age of industrialism, of capitalism, and of plutocracy, the masters and rulers take possession of the goods of this planet, leaving the weaker ones in misery. In an age

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

when—or in a country where—a man's eyes are turned to heaven rather than to earth, the priest or the Church in power will attribute to himself or herself that heaven which is a reality to the believer, and refuse admittance to it to anyone belonging to another faith or Church not in power. To the Vaisyas, therefore, and especially to the Sûdras, who had been accustomed to the belief that even in after-life the distinction between them and their betters would not be obliterated, the new gospel of the Buddha was *glad tidings* indeed. All men were admitted equally to religious exercises, and thus had the prospect of reward in heaven. Buddha abolished, so to speak, private and exclusive property in heaven, and introduced communism in religion. "My law," said this prophet of spiritual democracy and of religious communism, "is a law of grace for all," and what is a law of grace for all? It is a law under which all miserable beggars may become members of a religious order or ascetics.<sup>1</sup> Thus, religious devotion was no longer a prerogative of birth and of rank, but of merit alone.

Buddha, therefore, did not attempt to effect social reforms so as to make human suffering less, although it touched him with the deepest sympathy. He had been reared in luxury, and, like many a modern ruler, kept apart from the common people, and when he came in touch with the sufferings of humanity a great sadness seized him. Leaving wife and child, he went out to lead the life of a contemplative hermit in the forest, where he sought for a solution of the great problem of human suffering. His sympathy with suffering filled him, however, with despair and with a feeling of pessimism, and the solution he found was Death. The supreme good is "eternal emancipation

<sup>1</sup>. Cf. Burnouf, *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme*, 1876, p. 193.



## THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

by Nirvana, undisturbed repose or blissful extinction.”<sup>1</sup> As he taught life to be an evil which man should get rid of as speedily as possible, it is not astonishing that he should have paid but little attention to the relations of men to men, to the ideas of either State or society, to all that these conceptions represent and the duties they involve. Buddha’s excessive idealism disdained the material conception of humanity, progress, and civilisation. Preaching the benefits of renunciation of the world, and of abnegation, he had no room for any ideas on economic equality or inequality. Extolling poverty, the distribution of wealth became for him a futile question. “This, brethren,” he taught, “is the grand truth concerning suffering.”

“To be born is to suffer ; to grow old is to suffer ; to die is to suffer ; to lose what is loved is to suffer ; to be tied to what is not loved is to suffer ; to endure what is distasteful is to suffer : in short, all the results of individuality, of separate selfhood, necessarily involve pain or suffering. This, brethren, is the grand truth concerning the source of suffering. It lies in that will to live or craving for life which is in itself the cause of its renewal, seeking satisfaction, now in one, now in another form. It is the craving, the gratification of the passions, the craving for one’s own personal happiness, whether in this life or in some life after this.”<sup>2</sup> The craving for existence must therefore be overcome, got rid of, routed out entirely. This can be done by the eightfold path, that is to say : Right views ; right aspirations ; right speech ; right conduct ; right living ; right effort ; right mindfulness ; and right recollectedness.<sup>3</sup>

With such ideas Buddha naturally could care but

<sup>1</sup> Donald A. Mackenzie, *Indian Myths and Legends*, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Subhādra Bhikshu, *A Buddhist Catechism*, pp. 37-8. London, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

little for social or economic injustice. He found India of the Brahmans, India of the laws of Manu, solidly and firmly established on a system of castes, of inequality, and of social injustice. He found this system consecrated and confirmed by the laws of Manu, which accorded all the privileges to the Brahmans and to the warriors, and all the burdens to the lower classes. The duty of the Sûdra, this proletarian of India, was to toil, labour, serve, and obey. It was his lot in life to work, but he was not allowed to amass wealth by his honest toil. For if a Sûdra succeeded in amassing wealth—and thus became a *nouveau riche*—he would offend the sense of proportion of the upper classes, grow insolent and annoy the aristocratic Brahmana. The duty of the *canaille* was to work, but to allow them to enjoy the fruit of their labours was against the code of Manu, the code of aristocracy and of caste. For Manu's contempt for labour is profound. In his code he excludes from all religious ceremonies the *incendiary*, the *poisoner*, and the *working-man* who builds houses or plants trees ; the seducer of innocent girls is coupled with the farmer and the shepherd !

The Brahmana is not allowed to take his food from a tailor, a smith, an armourer, a painter, a physician, or a perverted and ferocious man. Traditional and hereditary laws made this institution of caste, " this edifice of social injustice," as firm as a rock, which the waves of centuries failed to undermine. No one was allowed to marry in a caste not his own, and the son had to continue the profession of the father. Heredity and tradition ! The sons of tailors or of cobblers would be cobblers and tailors, the sons of butchers, butchers in their turn. By way of consolation, the disinherited, the lowly and oppressed were told that

## THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

such institutions were sacrosanct, not only because of their existence since time immemorial, but especially on account of their Divine origin. And the poor Sûdras, the proletarians of India, bent their heads, accepted their lot, worked and suffered.

It was this edifice of inequality and of injustice which Buddha had found in India. He attacked it from the religious side and shook its foundations. He attacked it on its religious side for two reasons: Firstly, because economically it was too strongly fortified, and, secondly, because he cared but little for the goods of this world. Buddha only understood the equality of man in suffering. His aim was to teach them redemption from disease, old age, and death, and, as all men are exposed to these necessary evils, all have a right to that teaching and to the religious practices which will procure for them salvation. Before the misery of the human race, social distinctions disappear, and the slave is as good as the prince.<sup>1</sup>

There is a vast difference between India and China. Leaving the former country for the latter, we emerge from the spiritual conception of life, the mysticism of India, and penetrate into the realism of China. We are in the midst of a rational conception of life. In India religion rules politics and society, whilst in China ethics and politics and society are placed on a more rational and human basis.<sup>2</sup> It was in China where the first words of a gospel of labour were uttered, and where the first echo of a social democracy, or of the equality of all its members, resounded. The Chinese differ considerably from the Hindus. They are not a speculative nation, and do not listen to those who tell them to neglect this planet, which is only a

<sup>1</sup> Barthélemy St.-Hilaire, *Le Bouddha*, p. 145. Paris, 1866.

<sup>2</sup> Janet, *loc. cit.*, p. 27.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

place of exile. The Chinese look upon this life as something positive, and are therefore practical in their *Weltanschauung*, almost material. Such a conception of life exercised very early its influence upon Chinese politics and government, which was since times immemorial patriarchal. Thirty-five centuries before our era a Chinese Emperor seems to have instituted—not a Ministry of Labour or of Pensions, but a Ministry of the Poor! A little later another Minister, who soon became Emperor, declared that it was the duty of a good prince to provide the necessaries of life for his subjects, so that no one should suffer want.

The sacred books of China are full of theories on the omnipotence of the State *in the interests of the people*. These theories may be summed up as a mild State socialism. China was a democratic monarchy, or a monarchy by the grace of the people. It was a monarchic democracy wherein the State took care of the subjects and saw to it that no one was out of work or suffered want, but where individual liberty was reduced to its minimum. The State had all the responsibilities for the welfare of the people, but possessed also all the authority. It is for this reason that China, in spite of an almost democratic government which she enjoyed thirty centuries ago, did not follow the march of civilisation. At a time when Europe was still in a state of savagery, when in Greece, the cradle of our civilisation, slaves were treated like cattle and working-men were held in contempt, and when in Asiatic countries like India, priests and potentates oppressed the people and threw all the burden of labour upon their shoulders, China had a democratic government, and her moralists and statesmen proclaimed the formula of *vox populi, vox dei* (Heaven hears and Heaven sees through the ears and



## THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

eyes of the people). Whatever the people consider worthy of recompense or punishment, Heaven will reward or punish.<sup>1</sup>

But China remained behind civilisation and democratic progress simply because her morality lacked the basis of individual liberty. In proclaiming the duties of the State and of society, China forgot the principle upon which these duties should repose, namely, individual liberty, a fact which numerous ardent apostles of the gospel of labour and of social democracy in modern times also seem to forget.

The great law-giver of China was Confucius. He did not, like Buddha, promulgate any esoteric teaching. His doctrines were practical, rational, and human. He addressed himself to his fellow-men with a view to developing not so much their religious sentiments as their moral feelings. Imbued with respect for ancient traditions, he nevertheless attached but little importance to ceremonies and to ritual. To accomplish our duty, to live in conformity with our rational nature, such is the destiny of man. But what is duty, and which are the dictates of our rational nature? To this Confucius replies that the sense of duty is implanted in the heart of every man, and it urges him to strive after perfection and perfectibility. Perfection is above human nature, but man can strive to become perfect, and Confucius' ideal of perfection reminds us of the sage of the Stoics. Strength of character, moderation, love of his fellow-men, are some of the virtues which man, striving after perfection, should endeavour to cultivate. "To live on a handful of rice, to drink water, recline the head on the arm to sleep, is a state which has its satisfaction."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Meng-tseu*, iii. 5; see also S. M. Melamed, *Der Staat im Wandel der Jahrtausende*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Lun-Yu*, vii. 3 (Pauthier's translation).

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Like the founder of the Hebrew nomocracy, Confucius identified religion with national government and with political life. In spite, however, of his tendency towards a sort of political democracy, and his assertion that the only guarantee for a prince to retain his sovereignty is the love of his people,<sup>1</sup> Confucius is far from being a political or social reformer, much less a utopist. He endeavoured to ameliorate social and economic conditions, but the principle by which he is guided in his theories and counsels given to rulers and ruled is that of *juste-milieu*. He gives excellent advice on the manner of governing people, of increasing the revenue and of avoiding waste ; he urges the people to produce more, the Ministers to spend less, to rule wisely, and if they are incompetent, to resign.<sup>2</sup> He always advises the rulers not to abuse their power so as not to arouse the ire of the people. Confucius even approves one of those revolutions which frequently took place in China and resulted in a change of the dynasty.<sup>3</sup> Beyond, however, an advanced liberalism, tinged with philosophic democracy, Confucius did not go. As a moralist he praised the sentiments of humility, charity, and fraternity, and even the brotherhood and equality of men. He urged men to love their neighbours,<sup>4</sup> and to treat others as they wished to be treated themselves.<sup>5</sup> It has been rightly said that *reciprocity* was the fundamental doctrine of Confucius.<sup>6</sup>

Two centuries after Confucius, Meng-tsu, or Mencius, revived the teachings of the master, and his political

<sup>1</sup> " Obtain the affection of your people and you will obtain the Empire ; lose the affection of the people and you lose the Empire." (*Ta-Hio*, x. 10.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, x. 18, 22 ; and *Lun-Yu*, xi. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Lun-Yu*, xiv. 17, 18 ; see also Janet, loc. cit., p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> *Tchoung-Young*, i. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ta-Hio*, ix. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Lun-Yu*, iv. 15.

## THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

democratic tendencies were even more pronounced. Mencius described in glowing language the economic state of the people and gave a gloomy picture of their misery.<sup>1</sup>

He is more pronounced than Confucius with regard to social justice. He recognises neither caste nor slavery; for there are neither Brahmanas nor Sûdras in the social philosophy of China. Basing himself on the theory of reciprocity, Mencius admits only two classes of people, who are necessary to and supplement one another.<sup>2</sup> "One class of people," he writes, "work with their intelligence, whilst the others are working with their hands. The former govern the people, the latter are governed. Those who are governed provide sustenance for men, those who govern are provided with sustenance. Such is the universal law of the world." In other words, Mencius recognised the principle of division of labour, intellectual and manual, but both are placed upon an absolutely equal footing, both being necessary to the community. We miss, in the doctrine of Mencius, that contempt for manual labour which we shall meet in Greece, in the philosophical systems of Aristotle and even of Plato. We are also far from the conception of Manu, who finds in the toil of the working-man something "contemptible." It is almost like an echo of social democracy and a gospel of labour wafted to us across thirty centuries. "Both work," says Mencius, "the intellectual and the manual labourer, and it is quite evident that he who works with his brain, and is engaged in instructing the people, cannot, at the same time, work with his hands."

Whilst the Indian branch of the primitive Aryans

<sup>1</sup> Mencius, *Chinese Classics*, i. 1. 7; see also S. Cognetti de Martiis, *Socialismo antico*, 1889, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> Mencius, v. 1; v. 4.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
had their legislator in Manu, who had sanctioned the practice established by the strong—namely, leisure for the privileged classes and labour for the despised—the Iranian branch of the Aryans had their legislator in Zoroaster.

Zoroaster may be called the Prophet of Labour, and the bringer of a social message of consolation to the oppressed. We are told in the Zend-Avesta that from Bactria the call of the oppressed peasants had risen to heaven—and urged Zoroaster to undertake his mission of bringing peace and happiness to man. He preached a gospel of activity and of solidarity. Whilst the Indian Brahmanas saw in religion only a means to an end—namely, the firm establishment of their aristocratic rule—Zoroaster came to the rescue of the toilers and of the working-man. Work for him was the completion of prayer, “the hands fulfilling the prayer of the heart.” Like the prophets of Israel, like the rabbis of the Talmud,<sup>1</sup> Zoroaster preached the dignity of labour and a sympathy with the labouring classes. The Zend-Avesta is made for the working-men, not for the leisured classes, for the lowly and not for the exalted. Brahmanism and Mazdeism are thus diametrically opposed to each other. The Hindu looks upon evil as of Divine origin, and never dreams of resisting it, but of escaping it through annihilation of personality. The Parsee, on the contrary, following the example of Ormuzd, combats evil, and endeavours to do good upon earth. The mission of man is, therefore, not contemplation, but activity and labour. The goal of life is the re-establishment of that harmony which existed in creation before it was destroyed by Ahriman. Evil has made its appearance in the world in the shape of poverty and that suffering which

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI.

## THE ORIENT—INDIA, CHINA, PERSIA

follows in its wake. The worshippers of Ormuzd, therefore, alleviate poverty by cultivating the soil, thus creating wealth and prosperity. All labour is extolled by Zoroaster, just as contemplation is praised by Buddha.<sup>1</sup> Unhappy, says Zoroaster, is the land that has long lain unsown with the seed of the sower and wants a good husbandman. The Vendidad, the Leviticus of the Zend-Avesta, is full of regulations on labour, and very frequently reminds us of the Proverbs of Solomon and the sayings of the Talmud. It contains minute details on contracts, breach of contracts, and the relations of the labourer to the employer. Zoroaster's dogma of solidarity exercised a preponderating influence upon social relations. But it was not only solidarity, it was also equality which Zoroaster taught. Greece and Rome only knew the equality of citizens, but ignored the equality of men.<sup>2</sup> Brahmanism, again, attributed the inequality of man to a Divine ordinance, whilst Zoroaster maintained that there was an original equality of all men and that existing social inequality was the work of Ahriman, the spirit of evil.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Darmsteter, *The Zend-Avesta*, Part I, *Vendidad*, Fargard iii, §§24-33; Fargard xviii.

<sup>2</sup> F. Laurent, *Histoire de l'Humanité*, vol. i, p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> Anquetil, *Zend-Avesta*, vol. ii, p. 376.





## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN THE MOSAIC CODE

"Moses belongs to the great class of nation-makers ; to a class of men who have a place by themselves in the history of politics, and who are among the rarest and highest of the phenomena of our race. And he stands in harmony with his work."

W. E. GLADSTONE.

"Whenever the people have taken up the Bible, and allowed their minds to be thoroughly imbued with its teaching, they have come forth strong with the spirit of reform and equalisation."

E. DE LAVELEYE.

"And so we have in the Mosaic code and its amplifications the most careful safeguards against slavery and a deadening poverty. . . . It is an expression of the sense of justice and an indication of the economic ideals of the religious leaders of the people. . . . Its spiritual and moral characteristics have always remained as enticing ideals in the minds of men."

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, *The Socialist Movement*.

## CHAPTER IV

### LABOUR LEGISLATION IN THE MOSAIC CODE

THE Aryans of India are more closely related to the Europeans than are the Semites. They have the same original home and language, and even laws and religion, and yet, every European is better acquainted with the history and the religion of the Semitic Hebrews than he is with those of his distant ancestors, the Aryans of India. After eighteen centuries of Christianity, the European feels more at home in the valleys of Palestine and on the hills of Samaria or Galilee than on the Indian peninsula. The Jordan and the Lake of Genezareth are better known to him than are the Indus and the holy Ganges; the mention of Jerusalem touches a deeper chord in his heart than Capilavestu or Arjavarta. Only the educated have heard of the Vedas and of the Ramayana, of the heroic fights of Rama, of the avatars of Brahma, and of the law of Karma. But every child who has visited a board-school, the farmer, the servant, and the labourer, have heard of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Very few are ignorant of the Ten Commandments of Moses, and every churchgoer is acquainted with the Psalms of David; whilst few have heard of the laws of Manu, of the Zend-Avesta, or of Zarathustra. It would therefore seem that a few indications about the Bible and the Prophets would be sufficient to point out the relation of the Pentateuch and of the Prophets to the question I am



discussing, namely, labour and social democracy. And yet, just because Europeans are so well acquainted with the history of Israel since early childhood, and the early impressions are so deeply rooted in their breasts, it is sometimes more difficult to eradicate ancient conceptions, and to call the attention of the reader to many facts which will strike him as new and therefore startling.

To try and discover the purely human element in Holy Scripture may even appear objectionable to many a believer. I have, however, no intention whatever to indulge in Bible criticism, even if I am laughed at for not being in the fashion. The point at issue is simply the relation to labour and democracy of the Pentateuch, of the Prophets, and of the Talmud, books which mirror the ideas and conception of life in ancient Israel.

Montesquieu,<sup>1</sup> Saalschütz,<sup>2</sup> and many other scholars are of opinion that the Jewish State was a pure theocracy, ruled by priests. It was Josephus who was the first to call the Jewish State a theocracy.<sup>3</sup> Spinoza, too, writes that the Mosaic constitution and the government of the Hebrews were theocratic.<sup>4</sup> "The supreme commander of the army," he argues, "could not be appointed without the consent of Jahve."

Others, however, especially J. Michaelis,<sup>5</sup> endeavoured to show that the State founded by Moses was a worldly republic which afterwards changed into a limited monarchy. Without entering into a detailed discussion on this point, suffice it to say that the Jewish State, as founded by Moses, was not a pure theocracy

<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*.

<sup>2</sup> Saalschütz, T. L., *Das Mosaische Recht*, vol. i, pp. 2 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph C. Apion, vol. ii, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Spinoza, *Tract. theolog. polit.*, ch. xvii.

<sup>5</sup> J. D. Michaelis, *Das Mosaische Recht*, vol. i, ch. i; see also Melamed, S. M., *Der Staat im Wandel der Jahrtausende*, 1911, p. 21.

## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

in the strictest sense of the word. A theocracy is a government where the entire power is vested in the hands of the priests, who, like the Brahmanas of India, are at once the aristocracy and the landed proprietors.<sup>1</sup> Such was not the case in Israel. Whilst in Egypt and in India the sacerdotal caste was the only propertied class, in Israel the tribe of Levi was propertyless and almost proletarian.<sup>2</sup> Although the tribe of Levi was chosen and destined for the particular service of the Lord, the whole community was called a "holy nation," and was enjoined to live in accordance with the Divine law. The Mosaic State has, therefore, been rightly called a *nomocracy*, that is, a State ruled by the law for the purpose of realising this law—which is intensely moral. Even Janet,<sup>3</sup> who calls the Jewish State a theocracy, admits that it was a theocracy "with a democratic setting." Religion, ethics, and politics were closely connected and interwoven in the Jewish State.

The highest authority emanated from God and belonged to Him. Israel's *contrat social* was made with God. The nation and the land were His property, and He was, so to speak, the ground landlord. He was the master, the king, and the ruler. Not only were religion and ethics identical in Judaism, but politics, as well as economics, were based upon a religious foundation. "Nowhere," writes F. Walter, "do we meet in such a clear form with the idea of introducing morals into economics as we do in the Mosaic State."<sup>4</sup> The religious idea was transferred from the realm of spiritualism into that of realism and

<sup>1</sup> C. Twisten, *Die religiösen, politischen und sozialen Ideen der asiatischen Kulturvölker*, 1872.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Janet, *loc. cit.*, p. 274; Deut. xiv. 27-9; xviii. 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> F. Walter, *Die Propheten in Ihrem Sozialen Beruf*, p. 5.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY of daily life. National life, in its political, social, and economic manifestations, was based upon and regulated by religion. For the first time in history we see economics inspired by and made dependent upon ethics. I have said that Israel's *contrat social* was made with God, but if God was the ruler and the king, man was conceived as having been created in His image. He recognised God as his master, but was the equal of all other men. Here we have the democratic tinge. A careful study of the Old Testament, of the Pentateuch, and of the Prophets, will convince any impartial student that these books breathe a spirit of social justice, of social equality, and of social democracy, of respect for and of sympathy with the toilers, the labourers, the poor, and the proletarians.

One of the institutions to which the law of Moses is clearly opposed, and by which it is so characteristically distinguished from pagan antiquity, is the system of caste. The Pentateuch abolishes the pagan notion of judging man according to caste, birth, or rank, and teaches a perfect social equality. Equality of men is one of the fundamental principles, one of the postulates, of the law of Moses. It is a natural law sanctified by God and not to be abolished by man. Even the priests and the Levites enjoyed no prerogatives, and it is distinctly stated that they could be dragged away from the altar. "The principle of national fraternity," writes Bluntschli,<sup>1</sup> "is one of the great conquests of Mosaism. Moses not only does not suffer any distinction of caste in his newly-formed nation,<sup>2</sup> but he impresses upon Israel the idea of perfect equality and of fraternity in all classes of society and in all occupations." In a word, it is a

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Bluntschli, *Altasiatische Gottes-und-Welt-Ideen*, 1866, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Laws of Manu.



## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

democratisation of society he aimed at. The House of Israel is a large family, created by the one God, descended from the same ancestors, united by the triple bond of religion, law, and country. Even priests and princes are no exception. The priestly tribe is a brother-tribe of all the other tribes, and there is no distinction between this tribe and all the other tribes, as, for instance, in the laws of Manu.<sup>1</sup> The rich is the brother of the poor, and the servant is the brother of the master.

The Proclamation of American Independence, the ideas of the eighteenth century and of the French Revolution, had thus been expressed centuries ago in a number of passages of the Pentateuch. This conviction of the natural equality of man is part and parcel of the Jewish spirit. In order to give the reader a bird's-eye view of the labour-legislation of the Mosaic Code and its spirit of democracy, I have grouped together the passages referring to slaves, hired servants, creditors, and the sabbatical year and jubile. Readers are supposed to be familiar with the Bible, but the passages on labour-legislation, quoted below, will enable them to compare at a glance these laws with the jurisdiction of either India, Greece, or Rome.

### *Labour-legislation in the Mosaic Code— Sabbatical and Jubile*

Lev. xix. 13 : Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbour, nor rob him : the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

Lev. xxv. 1-7 : And the Lord spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, Speak unto the children of

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord. Six years thou shalt sow thy field and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruits thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of itself of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, and the grapes of thy undressed vine thou shalt not gather: it shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. And the sabbath of the land shall be for food for you; for thee and for thy servant and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant and for thy stranger that sojourn with thee; and for thy cattle, and for the beasts that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be for food.

Lev. xxv. 10-16: And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you; ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of the undressed vines. For it is a jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. In this year of jubile ye shall return every man unto his possession. And if thou sell aught unto thy neighbour, or buy of thy neighbours' hand, ye shall not wrong one another: according to the number of years after the jubile thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the crops he shall sell unto thee. According to the multitude of the years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and

## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

according to the fewness of the years thou shalt diminish the price of it ; for the number of the crops doth he sell unto thee.

Lev. xxv. 25-31 : If thy brother be waxen poor and sell some of his possession, then shall his kinsman that is next unto him come, and shall redeem that which his brother has sold. And if a man have no one to redeem it, and he be waxen rich and find sufficient to redeem it ; then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it ; and he shall return unto his possession. But if he be not able to get it back for himself, then that which he hath sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile : and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.

And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold ; for a full year shall he have the right of redemption. And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be made sure in perpetuity to him that bought it, throughout his generations : it shall not go out in the jubile. But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be reckoned with the fields of the country : they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubile.

Lev. xxv. 35-42 : And if thy brother be waxen poor, and his hand fail with thee ; then thou shalt uphold him : as a stranger and a sojourner shall he live with thee. Take thou no usury of him or increase ; but fear thy God : that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor give him thy victuals for increase.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.

And if thy brother be waxen poor with thee, and sell himself unto thee ; thou shalt not make him to serve as a bondservant : as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee ; he shall serve with thee unto the year of jubile : then shall he go out from thee, he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt : they shall not be sold as bondmen.

Deut. xv. 1-11 : At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release : every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbour ; he shall not exact it of his neighbour and his brother ; because the Lord's release hath been proclaimed. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it : but whatsoever of thine is with thy brother thine hand shall release. Howbeit there shall be no poor with thee ; (for the Lord will surely bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it) ; if only thou diligently hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all this commandment which I command thee this day. For the Lord thy God will bless thee, as He promised thee : and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow ; and thou shalt rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over thee.

If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart,

## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother : but thou shalt surely open thine hand unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a base thought in thine heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release is at hand ; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou give him nought ; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him : because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy work, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land : therefore I command thee saying, Thou shalt surely open thine hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor, in thy land.

Deut. xv. 13-18 : And when thou lettest him go free from thee thou shalt not let him go empty : thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy threshing floor, and out of thy winepress ; as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee : therefore I command thee this thing to-day. And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go out from thee ; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee ; then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise. It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou lettest him go free from thee ; for to the double of the hire of an hireling hath he served thee six years : and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Deut. xxiv. 10-13 : When thou dost lend thy neighbour any manner of loan, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge : Thou shalt stand without, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring forth the pledge without unto thee. And if he be a poor man thou shalt not sleep with his pledge : thou shalt surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his garment, and bless thee : and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the Lord thy God.

Deut. xxiv. 14, 15 : Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates ; in his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it ; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it : lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.

The above passages clearly show the democratic spirit of the Mosaic Constitution. The law of equality was and is deeply rooted in the Jewish spirit, and we shall see it later on insisted upon not only by the Prophets, but also by the Rabbis of the Talmud. Several authors have pointed out that the social equality, or social democracy, the principles of which have been laid down in the Pentateuch, and which formed the foundation of the Jewish law, of the Jewish Constitution, and of the Jewish State, is an echo of the nomadic life which Israel had led in the desert before settling in Canaan. Among the Bedouins social equality has always existed, and still continues to exist. Life and existence being continually exposed to dangers, the possessions of the individual, and his own life, are of little importance as compared to the welfare of the collectivity.



## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

Be this, however, as it may; the law of Moses consecrates this social equality. What is more important is the fact that ideas of democracy, of respect for labour and of the dignity of labour can be realised in an agrarian much more easily than in an industrial State. And such was the State founded by Moses. The problems with which the Mosaic Code deals are mostly agrarian, and numerous are the laws referring to the peasant class and the poor labourers. During their wanderings in the Libyan Desert the chief source of revenue and of production of the Israelites was only cattle-breeding, but the cultivation of land became the principal occupation, as soon as Israel settled in Canaan. Property was established on the basis of democratic principles, of perfect equality and justice. The land was distributed equally among the different tribes, with the exception of the tribe of Levi. The tribes again distributed it among the various families. In order, however, to safeguard the peasant class and to prevent, as far as possible, the accumulation of land in the hands of the few, various laws were promulgated.<sup>1</sup> Such were especially the institutions of the sabbatical year and the jubile which guaranteed the return of the land to the original owner after a certain lapse of time.<sup>2</sup>

Many reasons have been ascribed to this institution : in the Cabala, by the Rabbis, and by modern economists. Socialistic writers see in the institution of the jubile a clear indication of the communistic undercurrent of Mosaic law.<sup>3</sup> Land, they argue, was the property of the family and not of the individual. The latter could dispose during his lifetime of the property

<sup>1</sup> E. Buhl, *Die sozialen Verhältnisse der Israeliten*.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xxv. 1-17; Deut. xv. 1-8; xxxi. 10-13; Exod. xxiii. 10-12; Lev. xxvi. 1-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Staatswörterbuch*, vol. ix, p. 485.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

which his ancestors had received from the nation, and even for some time after his death, but he could not alienate it for ever. This opinion is shared even by non-socialist writers.<sup>1</sup> Some have gone so far as to see in the Mosaic Code the first historical system of *communism*. But social laws based upon justice and equality, social reforms, and even a tendency to democratise society, are not at all identical with either socialism or communism.<sup>2</sup> The institution of the jubile was primarily due to the anxiety of the legislator "to keep intact the original allotment of the holy land among the tribes, and to discountenance the idea of servitude to men."<sup>3</sup> It was an endeavour to prevent an agglomeration of property in the hands of the few, and to conserve not only a social but also an economic equilibrium. These institutions, which were inaugurated in Canaan, when the land was being apportioned among the tribes, had the advantage, on the one hand, of protecting the peasant class from the exploiting manœuvres of a plutocracy, which Moses foresaw was bound to spring up. On the other hand they enabled the poor debtor to discharge his debt and to rise again in the world by his honest toil, and they set free those who, driven by necessity in spite of the original social equality, became servants of their fellow-citizens. Moses, as we shall see, did not abolish slavery, or serfdom, but he did his best to discountenance it. "For unto me the children of Israel are servants: they are my servants, and they shall not be servants to servants."<sup>4</sup> Both these institutions, the sabbatical year and the jubile, are economic laws, inspired by a sense of

<sup>1</sup> L. Stein, *Die Soziale Frage*, 1897, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Clark.

<sup>3</sup> *Jewish Encyclopædia*, vol. x, s.v. "Sabbatical Year and Jubile," p. 605.

<sup>4</sup> Lev. xxv. 55.

## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

social justice and even of social democracy, but they can just as little be traced to communism as the poor-laws in the Pentateuch which have been so highly praised.<sup>1</sup>

Property, although distributed among tribes and families, was private and *not* collective. Even later on, when, in consequence of abuse, oppression, and of the exploitation of a capitalist class, social reforms became urgent, and the prophets, as opposed to the priests, demanded thoroughgoing reforms and a return to the democratic past, communistic tendencies rarely arose.<sup>2</sup> Communism was a much later Jewish manifestation.

The Jewish spirit is individualistic—and is fundamentally opposed to communism. This spirit of independence stimulates the Jew to be an individual producer, to work in the sweat of his brow, and to enjoy the fruit of his labour. Here and there an echo of theoretical anarchism *à la* Tolstoy, may be heard in the words of the prophets, but it is an individual anarchism. The spirit of individualism, which is not at all opposed to social democracy, or democratisation of society, is very strong in the Jew. Those Jews who, in the course of centuries, appeared and appear as apostles of communism, had and have as a rule nothing in common with either Jews or Judaism. Judaism for them was and is only an accident of birth.

That the Pentateuch is not at all an endeavour to build up a system of communism is sufficiently proved by the fact that the lawgiver evidently foresaw sooner or later the rise of a proletarian class. Although the land had originally been allotted in equal proportion,

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Cornill, *Das alte Testament und die Humanität*, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Except in one or two isolated sects; see Chapter V.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Moses was too great a statesman<sup>1</sup> and too great a psychologist not to be aware of the physical and mental inequality of man and of the consequences they are bound to lead to. He foresaw that, as time proceeded, the different degrees of energy, laboriousness, physical strength, thriftiness, and above all the tendency of man to acquire, possess, and enjoy, to throw the burden of labour upon the shoulders of his weaker fellow-men, and to usurp the fruits of their labours, would result in an economic inequality. He expressed his conviction in a few words: "For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt surely open thine hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor, in the land."<sup>2</sup>

The Bible therefore, realising what is possible and what is impossible, distinguishing between Utopia and reality, between dreams and actuality, between illusion and fact, does not attempt a definite, clear-cut solution of the problem, but is content to strive, in some reasonable measure, to reconcile these antitheses.<sup>3</sup> According to the Bible there will always be poor and rich, and social equality is an impossibility. It is the confraternity of the human race, the abolition of the artificial distinctions between those who have and those who have not, for which man should strive—in short, all Biblical legislation has these aims in view. And these aims are to be obtained without resorting to brute force or provoking revolutions. The methods enjoined are noble, but not less efficacious than those suggested by men who believe

<sup>1</sup> "Only a supreme genius could pronounce in such a gigantic style the fundamental sentences of Divine and human order, and lay a rock-foundation which resists the tide of centuries." Cf. Bluntschli, *loc. cit.*, pp. 107 and 108; see also Machiavelli, where he considers Moses as one of the greatest builders of States; cf. Melamed, *loc. cit.*, p. 19, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> L. K. Amitai, *La Sociologie selon la législation juive*.

## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

only in material laws governing the destinies of men. The forces to be employed are spiritual and moral, namely, education, persuasion, cultivation of the feelings, training of the will, until the final goal is reached: the awakening and development of the sense of duty.

Thus, the Mosaic Constitution awaits the existence of a proletarian class as unavoidable in the course of the march of progress and civilisation, and the legislator was anxious to limit its spread by promulgating laws which not only made the lot of the proletarian bearable, but gave him hope of regaining his liberty and the possession of his patrimony, if not for himself, at least for his progeny. Foreseeing, therefore, that the peasant class of small farmers would not always exist on the lines laid down when the land was distributed, that they would not always work and live under their own vine and fig-trees, but hire out their labour, the lawgiver was anxious to promulgate such laws which would make the lot of the labourer a comparatively easy one.

And here I must say a few words on slavery in ancient Israel. As has been pointed out in a previous chapter, the origin of slavery is conquest.<sup>1</sup> The majority of slaves were prisoners of war, employed to do certain work, the female slaves working together with the women of the house.<sup>2</sup> The ancient Israelites, before they had permanently settled in Canaan, were engaged in war and frequently made prisoners of war. But the Pentateuch, with its ideas of liberty and social equality, with its tendency towards social democracy, *considering men as brothers and sons of one Father*, could not but look askance at the institution of slavery.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup> E. Meyer, *Die Sklaverei im Altertum (Kleine Schriften)*, 1910, p. 183.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Moses distinctly declared: "For they are my servants which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen."<sup>1</sup> This declaration not only abolished slavery within the tribe, but it gradually prepared the way for the abolition of slavery in general; anyhow, it mitigated the lot of the foreign slaves. "The lot of the slave," writes Letourneau, "was an easy one in Judæa." The very term applied to the Hebrew slave showed that he was looked upon merely as a servant, a member of the household, a domestic. In spite of his serfdom, he was not *unfree*. The Greeks called the slave *doulos*, or "the bound one," and among the Romans he was known as *mancipium*, whilst in the Bible the slave is called *ebed*, "working-man," "servant," a term which is not used in contradistinction to *unfree*. The word *ebed*, is, moreover, not exclusively applied to slaves, but often to priests, prophets, and high officials. It is the title of honour of Moses, of David, and of Abraham.<sup>3</sup> The slave was also called "the son of the house," or simply "the house."<sup>4</sup> A female slave was called *shifkhah*, which, literally translated, means "one belonging to the family."<sup>5</sup>

It has been admitted by all writers on economics that the advance of early human society in the arts of life was largely aided by the institution of slavery. It is argued that through slave-labour agriculture and industrial life progressed, wealth accumulated, and, above all, leisure was given to priests, philosophers, and poets to reflect and thus raise the level of human intelligence. Slavery enabled all the freemen of

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxv. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Letourneau, *L'Évolution de l'Esclavage*.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. i. 4; see also Hamburger, *Real-Encyclopædie für Bibel und Talmud*, s.v. "Sklaverei."

<sup>5</sup> See Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iv, s.v. "Servant," p. 462a.



## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

Greece to be sculptors, poets, and philosophers; slavery and compulsory labour were, therefore, important factors in the development of civilisation.<sup>1</sup> Without the enslavement of foreign and hostile tribes, humanity would never have advanced in civilisation and culture, and mighty States would never have developed. In order to conquer nature and subdue the natural forces to his own use, man required the labour of other men, and it was natural for him to employ for this task the foreigner, the hostile tribe, the syngenetic feeling being strong enough in him to prevent him from enslaving his own tribesmen.<sup>2</sup> Conquest and ethnic difference were therefore at the basis of the institution of slavery. This is not the place to discuss the truth and justice of these statements, but I can only repeat: If progress is only the result of the subjection of millions of human beings by others, then our civilisation has been too highly paid for.

If without human toil the vast structures of the Pyramids and of the Sphinx could never have been reared, it speaks sadly for humanity that this toil had to be servile, and sadder for the slaves who patiently submitted. "La force," wrote Rousseau, "a fait les premiers esclaves, leur lâcheté les a perpetués."<sup>3</sup> Anyhow, the institution of slavery existed in Asia long before the separation of the Semitic nations had taken place. Moses found this institution in existence, and did his best to lay the foundation for its complete abolition. "No nation of antiquity can boast of such laws of freedom, equality, and humanity, of condemnation of tyranny, of a mild treatment to be meted out

<sup>1</sup> Crozier, *Civilisation and Progress*.

<sup>2</sup> See Gumpłowicz, *Rassenkampf*; see also E. Meyer, loc. cit., p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> Rousseau, *Contrat Social*, i. 2.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
to the stranger, the alien, the lowly and oppressed as  
the laws contained in the Old Testament.”<sup>1</sup>

As for slaves, every student of antiquity admits that  
“slavery in that early and simple Hebrew civilisation  
was free from half the terrors with which the later  
Roman civilisation and the conditions of our modern  
life have invested it.”<sup>2</sup> Some writers, like Saalschütz,  
even deny the very existence of slavery among the  
ancient Hebrews.<sup>3</sup> Without going so far, it may be  
safely asserted that there was but little difference  
between the slave and the servant and the working-  
man in the Mosaic State. The status of the worker  
was a comparatively easy one, because work and labour  
were not despised among the ancient Hebrews as they  
were in Greece and Rome, and are even in modern  
times, when man is basking in the sunshine of a new  
culture. The Pentateuch insists not only upon the  
duty of every man to work, but also upon the sanctity  
and dignity of labour.

Among nations on a lower scale of civilisation, work  
and labour are usually not held in any esteem. Work  
is not considered as the best means of acquiring wealth,  
or even the necessities of life, robbery and conquest  
being surer means for that purpose. Robbery was  
even looked upon as a title of nobility, and during  
the Middle Ages the feudal barons were proud of  
their titles. In modern times, too, many men have  
been knighted or raised to the peerage, not on account  
of services rendered to the community, but because  
they have acquired wealth created by the labour of  
thousands, who in the sweat of their brows toiled for  
them in mines, factories, and breweries.

<sup>1</sup> M. Mandl, *Das Sklavenrecht des alten Testaments*.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, *ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> Mandl, *loc. cit.*, p. 11; Saalschütz, *Mosaisches Recht*.

## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

The early Jews, too, under the influence of Egypt, considered conquest as the proper source of man's revenue. The story of Genesis—where the Lord bids man to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow—was not yet known to the children of Israel. A new conception, however, took root in the hearts and thoughts of Israel, as soon as they had settled in Canaan. For the first time in the history of antiquity Israel preached the gospel of labour, of dignity of labour, and promulgated laws for the protection of labour.

Although, therefore, the Mosaic law, at its inception, did not abolish slavery, it threw open its doors to progress, and hastened the hour for the final overthrow of this degrading traffic. In the meantime, it strove to ameliorate the condition of the pariahs of society.

The first step along the way of liberation was the glorifying of work, which it elevated to the rank of a fundamental principle of life. The Biblical account of the six days of Creation appears to be expressly designed to set forth the glory and sanctity of work, and to bring man to look upon it as a social duty of the first order, indispensable for the maintenance of society and the advancement of human progress.<sup>1</sup>

The institution of the Sabbath, in co-relation with the Creation, seems, moreover, to have for *raison d'être*, the still further insistence upon and formal obligation of six days of work.<sup>2</sup>

For the Israelite work is an absolute duty: each man is called upon to contribute his quota according to his strength and ability, and to shirk this obligation is a serious neglect of a religious command. The rich, who have no need of the fruits of labour for their subsistence, are yet called upon to fulfil their daily

<sup>1</sup> Amitai, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xx. 9; xxxiv. 21; Deut. v. 13, etc.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

task of social work ; the obligation of work is as binding upon them as upon the poor, the only difference being that the rich have the advantage of being able to choose their occupation and hours.

Where everybody is thus constrained to work, work necessarily ceases to be looked upon with contempt. Thus one social distinction is abolished ; work being honourable, honour is reflected on the worker, and the poor artisan becomes the equal of the rich employer.

Among the ancient Egyptians,<sup>1</sup> the Hindus,<sup>2</sup> and other peoples of advanced culture, divided into strictly-marked castes, manual and industrial labour was looked down upon as fit only for the lowest and most-despised class of pariahs. Work enjoyed no higher esteem among the Greeks and Romans.<sup>3</sup> Agriculture shared the same discredit, and was left to the slaves ; petty trading, hawking, buying and selling of all kinds, was generally considered an occupation void and unworthy of interest.

Lycurgus, the lawgiver so highly praised by Herodotus and Plutarch, looked upon all manual labour, the exercise of any profession, as too low to attract any free citizen, and consequently abandoned these occupations to slaves and helots.

The younger races of Teutons and Gauls despised agriculture and left it to be carried on by civilians, or, as they expressed it, " to the timorous and cowards." We know the habits of the Redskins : hunting, fighting, or absolute inaction. For them there is no intermediate state, they would not degrade themselves by working with their hands. Such was not the case in Israel.

The Bible is full of the glorification of labour.

<sup>1</sup> Erman, *Egypt*, vol ii, p. 592.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter VII.

## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

The Bible has an idealistic conception of the true dignity of man and of his social responsibilities. Work and serviceable activity are to the author of the Mosaic Code fundamental duties which are ranked above all other obligations to society in general.

In the accounts of the Creation, God is represented as the author of the world, intentionally setting forth in this Divine act the extreme value and merit of work ; and what is worthy of a God cannot be less worthy of men.

The institution of the Sabbath is another consecration of this principle. It enjoins on man this day of rest, as necessary for the body's health and the soul's release from earthly matters ; but, at the same time, it commands the six days of work as imperatively as the Sabbath repose. The Biblical narrative then goes on to tell us that " God put man into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it,"<sup>1</sup> again emphasising the truth that work is a sacred duty. The subsequent account of the consequences of man's disobedience speaks of man " eating his bread in the sweat of his brow," a salutary reminder that it is work and not idleness that keeps man from moral shipwreck, and prevents him from becoming the prey of covetousness, envy, and jealousy.<sup>2</sup>

Noah planted the vine ; Abraham, considering his stirring life and many trials, must have been a man of considerable activity ; Isaac cultivated the land : " he sowed in that land " <sup>3</sup> ; Jacob served Laban, and his service was most certainly not a symbolism, but a reality. " This twenty years have I been with thee, thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young . . . in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night ; and my sleep departed from mine

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Amitai, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxvi. 12.

eyes." <sup>1</sup> Joseph was reduced to slavery for many long years ; Moses earned wages as a breeder of flocks, and God commanded him to build a tabernacle in the wilderness.<sup>2</sup> Gideon was an agriculturist, Saul also, David a shepherd, and he sings, " For thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands, happy shalt thou be." <sup>3</sup> Solomon, in his Proverbs, commends work, enjoins it as a second duty, ridicules and rails at the idle, castigates the sluggard and bids him go to the ant.

In the treatment of these questions, Jewish legislation is incontestably superior to that of other ancient races, and to some extent to that of the modern world, hence its high moral value. It makes no distinction between rich and poor ; all are alike, brothers. Wherever in the Pentateuch we find reference to the poor, it is always with the qualification of " brother," and in order to render the inequalities of fortune less apparent, it brings the weight of its authority to bear on the rich, urging them to be moderate in their display of pomp and luxury. The king himself is not excluded from these exhortations, as we see in Deuteronomy,<sup>4</sup> where he is bidden not to multiply his horses, nor his gold and silver, " that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren."

Not only is the author of the Pentateuch anxious to make the individual economically independent, not only does he preach a pure social democracy—that is, the brotherhood of the rich and the poor—but he also promulgates laws settling the relation of employer and employed, of the employer of labour and the working-man.

The Bible recognises two sorts of relationship between employer and employed, the latter consisting

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxvi. 38-40.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxv. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxxviii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Deut. xvii. 16, 17, 20.



## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

of two classes : those engaged for a fixed pay for a definite period, and those who are paid by the day. The former are looked upon by the law as one of the contracting parties, the other being the employer. The contract binds them equally for the stipulated time, and neither can shirk his obligations without forfeiting his honour and honesty.<sup>1</sup>

According to the law, a man may temporarily renounce his personal liberty, as, for instance :

- (1) If he is for the time being unable to support his family. In this case his servitude may not extend over six years.
- (2) If he is condemned by the civil law to pay back a sum of money, and has not the means to do so ; in this case he receives back his liberty as soon as the money is repaid.

Here we see an improvement on the acts formulated according to Roman law. It is a great advantage to enable a condemned man to make reprieve, whatever atonement may be owing, without subjecting him to a cruel and useless humiliation. Moreover, the Jewish law gives the delinquent an opportunity of amendment and moral recovery. Neither is there the fear of relapse and repetition of offence where this system prevails.

The daily labourer, being free to dispose of his person and work, is under an even sterner obligation to fulfil his duty to his employer to the very best of his powers, seeing that he can break his engagement any day he likes, either because his work is too hard or not sufficiently well paid, or because he has found more congenial work elsewhere. If the worker has engaged himself for a certain number of days, the contract is binding, and neither a strike nor any

<sup>1</sup> Amitai, loc. cit.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

unforeseen occurrence is a valid reason for not strictly carrying out the terms of agreement.

The Jewish law, which supplies the Hebrew people with regulations concerning the minutest details of their daily life and according to every possible situation in which anyone may be placed, nevertheless remains silent on the question of supply and demand, on the determination of wages, and on the mutual protection of employer and employed. It realised the impossibility of legislating on a matter subject to so many contingencies, to the chance fluctuations and accidental changes and modifications of the market. But we read, all the same, *that the hired servant was not to be oppressed, whether he might be of the brethren of the employer, or a stranger*. He was to receive his wages before sunset, "for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee."<sup>1</sup>

And does not Jeremiah hurl his "woes" on him that "buildeth his house by unrighteousness, that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and on those that join house to house and field to field till no room is left for the others, and as if they alone were the dwellers in the land"?

Thus, the early Hebrew State reached a high watermark of social justice and of sympathy for labour at the very beginning of the existence of its national life. From the deep recesses of religious and ethical feeling the sense of justice and equality welled up and ran with the clearness of a mountain spring. Without proclaiming natural equality of man, Judaism insisted upon social equality. It even went so far as to admit that complete economic equality is impossible.<sup>2</sup> In order not to increase this natural disparity, but rather

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxiv. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. James Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, vol. i.

## LABOUR LEGISLATION IN MOSAIC CODE

diminish it, the legislator of the Pentateuch impressed upon the Israelites the idea that, in spite of natural inequalities, one man is as good as another. Such a democratic conception of life and of society could only result in a strong sense of justice, of social and economic justice. On the one hand, the laws of Moses provide against the possibility of too much wealth accumulating in the hands of the few to the detriment of the many. On the other, foreseeing that man will always feel inclined to reap the benefit of the toil and labour of his fellow-men, to throw the burden of work upon the shoulders of the weaker, and usurp the fruits, Moses enjoined adequate and just treatment of the working-man.

He moreover impressed upon his people the duty of being kind and sympathetic to those upon whom Nature has not lavished her gifts, and Fortune has refused to smile. Whilst, however, preaching the doctrine of social equality and of social democracy, the author of the Pentateuch was aware of the difference of man's productive capacity. Therefore, community of property was never attempted in the Hebrew State. "Economic equality," writes Bryce, "is the attempt to expunge all differences in wealth by allotting to every man an equal share in worldly goods." Now, it was exactly this attempt which was made at the beginning of the Jewish State. The Jews, on entering Palestine, started equally, all having equal opportunities, and it remained for the individual to make the best of his opportunities.

That the Mosaic Code should pay particular attention to labour is very comprehensible. Moses was the first labour-leader of antiquity. He received the Divine call to set free the suffering and toiling masses who were labouring in the brickfields of Egypt. This



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

task he accomplished and led the Israelites out of bondage, liberating them from the slavery and compulsory labour of Pharaoh. This fact he never allowed the nation to forget. "You are free now," he told them. "You proletarians, working-men of yesterday, have now regained your self-respect, but do not fall into the error of imitating the cruelty of your masters of yesterday, by being hard in your turn towards the working-men in your employ. I have set you free, you proletarians, but not for the purpose of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat, but a holy nation, a community ruled by ideas of equality, fraternity, justice, and democracy. Till the earth, work, and multiply, but never forget that you were slaves and bricklayers in Egypt!" This Gospel of Justice, of social democracy and of equality, of respect for the lowly and oppressed, of the dignity of labour, and of sympathy with the working-man, went echoing down the ages, Dark Ages, and ages of Illumination and Reason. It is found in the American Declaration of Independence, on paper, and on the walls of public buildings in France.

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL OF THE HEBREW  
PROPHETS

" The prophets of the Old Testament, as an order, are alone in the world. They are brave. They are honest. They are pure from every stain. They contend for right against wrong, never for wrong against right. They fear God, and have no respect of persons. They are the friends of the afflicted and the poor. Even upon their indignation, their justice is written broad and large. They are impartial, for they were entirely emancipated from the spirit of class, and launched their withering censures both as freely and as frequently at the faulty members of their own orders, as at the kings, the priests, and the people."

THE RT. HON. W. E. GLADSTONE  
(*The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*).



## CHAPTER V

### THE SOCIAL GOSPEL OF THE HEBREW PROPHETS

THE social democratic structure founded by Moses and based on a natural and economic equality was, however, soon shattered. Economically the idea of equality could only be realised in an agricultural State, and such was the early Hebrew State. But the agricultural period was soon succeeded by a commercial one. Commerce, which had been in the hands of the Phœnicians,<sup>1</sup> was resorted to by Israel. On the one hand, the soil produced sufficient for home consumption and a surplus for exportation, and, on the other, the establishment of the monarchy gave to commerce a new stimulus. David conquered the important commercial cities on the shores of the Red Sea and the city of Damascus, whilst King Solomon entered into business relations with King Hiram of Tyre. The result was the usual abuse which characterises the commercial and industrial periods, namely, accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few, and the oppression of the proletariat and of the working-man. The old ideal of perfect equality and of real social democracy, the glory of Israel during the early period of its national existence, disappeared.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. ii. 7, 8 : " Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures ; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. Their land also is full of idols ; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made."

Isa. iii. 15 : " What mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the faces of the poor ? saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts."

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

A glaring difference arose between the idle rich and capitalists, and the proletarians and working-men.

In a measure, therefore, as commerce progressed the small landowners and farmers suffered ; a new class of rich merchants arose to whom the small peasants and landowners became indebted. The wealthy availed themselves of the opportunity to acquire the small estates and to accumulate vast properties. Enriched by commerce and lucrative financial transactions, they decided to become squires and landed proprietors, and the expropriation of the small owners and yeomen took place—*tout comme chez nous*.

Had Israel enjoyed a Labour Government, the evil might have been stopped before it was too late. But representative government by election was yet unknown. The task of a modern Labour Government was undertaken by the prophets of Israel, who began to preach the gospel of the lowly in favour of labour and of social democracy. In inspired words the prophets preached the gospel of labour and of social democracy, and the echo of their trumpet-call reverberated into the distant future.

At first, when the kingdom was established, when Saul, whom Samuel reluctantly anointed as king, was ruling Israel, the social democratic State still continued to exist in Palestine. Saul was an exceedingly democratic king. After his coronation, or anointment, he continued to lead the life of an ordinary peasant. Saul has been compared to the Roman Cincinnatus, summoned from the plough to take up the office of dictator. For when the deputies of Jabesh-Gilead came in quest of him, they found him leading a " yoke of oxen out of the field."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xi. 5.

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

Even later on, when already invested with royal dignity, Saul lived very quietly on his estate at Gibeon.<sup>1</sup> His family life was very simple, and his establishment modest. He had only one wife and one concubine.<sup>2</sup>

Under David, and especially under King Solomon, social circumstances changed. Instead of the old simplicity, we see wealth, display, luxury, fashion, and fast living. The expenses of the Court increased, and the taxes were raised in proportion. Capitalism had made its appearance, i.e. capital accumulated in the hands of a privileged class who lived and enjoyed life, whilst the poor and the lowly, the labourer, and even the small peasant, were exposed to all sorts of hardships. Israel witnessed now the same state of affairs which characterises the modern world and western civilisation, namely, extreme poverty on one side, and extreme wealth on the other. Gone was the old social democratic life of olden times, the times of the judges and even of the first years of the kingdom, when Saul drove his oxen home from his daily toil. The primitive social conditions, the democratic state of society, had disappeared, and a gulf had gradually been created between the different classes in Israel. A sharp contrast existed between the aristocracy and the people, between the splendour and luxury of the upper classes and the poverty of the masses. In spite of labour, hard and constant toil, the latter continued to live in misery, their hard earnings going to swell the possessions of the employer or being swallowed up by the fiscal exigencies, the collectors for the revenue mercilessly exacting payment even from the very poorest.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. ix. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xiv. 50 ; 2 Sam. xxi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Amos v. 11.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

A powerful current consequently arose in favour of the oppressed, of the orphan and of the widow, and in general of the weak and labouring classes. An attempt was made to restore the days of social equality, and if not of absolute economic equality, at least of economic justice, of an adequate treatment of the labourer, and a limitation of the abusive power of the now existing capitalists. It was urged that the old laws in favour of the poor, of the debtor, and of the labourer should now come again into practice. The preachers of this gospel of labour and democracy were the prophets.

The author of that strange and in many ways remarkable work, *The Martyrdom of Man*, who is not tender to either Judaism or Christianity, says of the Hebrew prophets: "The prophets were always the tribunes of the people; the protectors of the poor; as the tyrant revelled in his palace on the taxes extorted from industrious peasants, a strange figure would descend from the mountains, and, stalking to the throne, would stretch forth a lean and swarthy arm, and denounce him in the name of Jehovah, and bid him repent, or the Lord's wrath should fall upon him, and dogs should drink his blood."<sup>1</sup>

Whilst criticising in impassioned language the life of the idle rich, whilst openly accusing the nation of its crimes and the sons of Jacob of their transgressions, whilst exposing the sins of society, the prophets clamoured for a social regeneration, for a thorough-going reform on an ethical and religious basis, a return to the old simple and honest life, to sympathy with and encouragement of labour, adequate treatment and remuneration of labour, and a renovation of the middle classes, especially the small farmers. "The prophets,"

<sup>1</sup> Winwood Reade, *The Martyrdom of Man*, p. 218. Kegan Paul.

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

writes F. Walter,<sup>1</sup> "announced the great truth that even economies do not lie outside the ethical order, and that egotism ought not to be the motive force of a sound economic policy."

Whilst Plato was dreaming of his ideal state, of a republic where the aristocrats would live in the Eden of communism, and working-men would toil, where philosophers and warriors would live on the labour of slaves, the prophets of Israel were clamouring for social justice. Whilst the Stagirite was finding philosophical formulas to explain not only the necessity but also the natural right of slavery, Jeremiah was insisting upon the emancipation of slaves. The prophets were social reformers, and the Israelites did not really look upon them as supernatural beings.

It will be interesting to quote here Maimonides' definition of prophetism, which he explains philosophically :

"Know that each man possesses necessarily a faculty of daring ; without that he would not be moved by the thought of putting aside that which is injurious to him. This faculty of daring varies with force and weakness as the other faculties. Thus, as you find one man who goes forward against the lion and another who flees before a mouse. From the youngest age one recognises in children if this faculty of daring is strong or weak in them. In the same way this faculty of divination (which one finds in the prophets) exists in every man, but varies more or less. It exists, particularly, in the things in which a man occupies himself intensively and towards which he turns his thoughts. You divine, for example, that such an one has spoken or acted in such a manner, in such a circumstance, and it is really so. You find such a man in whom the

<sup>1</sup> F. Walter, loc. cit., p. 5.

faculty of conjecturing and of divination is so strong and true that almost all that in his imagination he believes to be is really such as he imagines it, or at least a part of it is so. The causes of this are numerous and (this happens) by a chain of numerous circumstances, antecedent, future, and present ; but by the force of this (faculty of) divination the spirit surveys all the premises and draws its conclusions in so short a time that one would say that it is the affair of an instant. It is by this faculty that certain men give warning of certain serious things which are bound to happen.

“ These two faculties—I mean the faculty of daring and the faculty of divination—must necessarily be very strong in the prophets. When the intellect (active or with the quality of divination) has a strong hold on them, these two faculties assume a very great power, and you know how far the effect produced by it has gone ; that is to say, that a man alone presented himself courageously with his staff before a great king, to deliver a nation from slavery imposed by him, and he felt neither terror nor fear, because he was told (by God), ‘ I will be with thee.’

“ The prophets have undoubtedly also speculative perceptions, but of such a nature that man by speculation only could not seize the causes which can bring such knowledge ; it is in such a case as when they predict things that man could not predict with the means of conjecture only, and of common divination. In reality this same inspiration (the overflowing of the intellect, active or with the quality of divination) which acts upon the imaginative faculty in such a manner as to bring it to such a perfection that its operation acts even to the prediction of the future, and to the perception of it, as if it worked with things



## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

perceived by the senses, and which arrived at this imaginative faculty by the way of the senses—this same inspiration, I say, brings to perfection also the action of the rational faculty to such a point that, by this action, it arrives at the point of knowing the real existence of things, and it possesses the perception of them as if it had secured this by speculative propositions.

“Such is the veritable idea of prophetism. And if, in this which I have just said of the prophets, I have held to the contention that they are true prophets, it has been to keep my reservations on the subject of men who possess neither rational ideas nor science, but only chimeras and erroneous opinions. Thus you find those who support the verity of their ideas by dreams which they have had, imagining that that which they have seen in their sleep is no other thing than the idea which they have conceived (themselves) or heard in the state of waking. This is the reason why one must not pay any attention to those whose rational faculty is not perfect, and who have not reached the highest speculative perfection, for he alone who has attained speculative perfection can obtain other (superior) attainments, when the understanding of divination takes hold of him.

“It is he who is truly a prophet, and it is he who was clearly spoken of in the words, ‘The true prophet is he who has a heart full of wisdom.’”<sup>1</sup>

“The fundamental idea,” writes Darmsteter, “the essentials in all the prophets are identical. It is a political and moral idea: it is a cry for social justice and for social reform. It is a constant appeal for mercy, a pleading for the oppressed, an apologia for the

<sup>1</sup> Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, translated from the Hebrew text by the author.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

proletariat and for the labouring classes, and an accusation hurled at the idle rich, the capitalists, monopolists, merchants, and profiteers. . . . The fundamental idea of the prophets, of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, may be summed up as follows : Whatever is not based upon social justice must perish ; Jahveh has revealed social justice to Israel, and Israel should realise social justice. A day will come when social justice *will* be realised.”<sup>1</sup>

Their spirit is in the modern soul. It matters little that they have spoken in the name of a god, Jehovah, and that the modern age speaks in the name of human thought ; for their Jehovah was only the apotheosis of the human soul, their own consciousness projected in the heavens. They loved all that we love, and their ideal cost nothing either to their reason or to their conscience. They placed in the heavens a god who wishes neither altars nor sacrifice nor canticles, “ but that right should gush forth as water, and justice as an inexhaustible river.” They made of right a force, of the idea a fact, before which all facts become dim ; by dint of believing in justice, they began it in history. They have had a cry of pity for all the unhappy, of vengeance for all oppressors of peace, and union for all people. They have not said to man : “ This world is not worth anything.” They have said to him : “ The world is good, and you also be good, be just, be pure.” They have said to the rich : “ You will not keep the salary of a labourer.” To the judge : “ You will punish without humiliating.” To the wise man : “ You are responsible for the soul of a people.” And they have taught more than one to live and die for the right without hope of the Elysian fields. They have taught people that, without an ideal, “ the

<sup>1</sup>J. Darmsteter, *Les Prophètes*, p. 48.

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

future hangs before them like a rag," that the ideal alone keeps one alive, and that the ideal is not the glory of conquering, neither riches, nor power, but to set, as a light in the midst of nations, the example of better laws and of a soul more elevated. Finally, they have thrown across the future, above the storms of the present, the arc of peace, of a great hope ; a radiant vision of a better humanity, more free from evil and from death ; which will know neither war nor unjust judges ; where the " divine science will fill the earth as the waters cover the bottom of the ocean " ; and where mothers will no longer give life for sudden death. Dreams of seers, to-day dreams of sociologists.

The spirit of prophetism is in science, but unknown to itself and without voice. This is the reason why, in the interregnum of the Word, anarchy reigns ; for the spirit exists and operates only by the magic of the words which express it. In the beginning is always the Word. But the language of these old prophets, as it is the most ancient, is also the youngest, and the new age has not yet found, neither in its philosophies, nor in its moralists, nor in its poets, and not even in its manuals of municipal morals, words which have a magic power such as these ; for they have concentrated in them all the tyrannies of the conscience and of the ideal.<sup>1</sup>

The prophets were not only labour-leaders, they were also statesmen, but statesmen who received no remuneration for their patriotic work.<sup>2</sup> They disdained to accept salaries from Court or nation, as it was already the custom even in ancient Israel and among the ancient Arabs.<sup>3</sup> Neither Jeremiah, the " loon of

<sup>1</sup> J. Darmsteter, loc. cit., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Buhl, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidenthums*, p. 135. See also 1 Sam. ix. 9 ; 2 Kings, v. 15 ; Micah iii. 5.



Anathoth," nor Isaiah, the wealthy aristocrat of society, or Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa, who gave such important advice to their kings, both in foreign policy and in domestic affairs, received any remuneration. And yet the aristocrat and the shepherd were equally leaders of a labour party, of a democratic party!

In glaring colours the prophets depicted the social and economic state of the country. They spoke with an eloquence which any Minister of a modern Labour Government, or even a strike leader, might have been proud of. On the one side there were the rich landowners, the possessors of vast estates, and on the other there was a proletariat, the poor who possessed none of the goods of this world. These were called the *dallim*, the *ebjonim* and *aniim*.<sup>1</sup> Of these the prophets were the champions. Not only the shepherd of Tekoa, but also the aristocrat, the wealthy Isaiah, were prophets of the democracy and of the proletariat.

The prophets of Israel, however, were to a certain extent universal. They uttered a cry of pity for *all* the oppressed, and a cry of vengeance against *all* oppressors. They preached peace and brotherhood to all nations. Their ideal was not only the equality of men, but also the equality of nations. They prophesied not only in the interests of Israel, but also in that of other nations. Egypt is called the people of God, and Assur "the work of My hands." Israel, together with these nations, is "the inheritance of the Lord." The prophets had at heart the future of all nations, and thundered against iniquities, social injustice, and enslavement of man by his fellow-man. They rejoiced at the happiness and prosperity of humanity,

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxxix. 10; Isa. xiv. 30; Amos ii. 8. See also Hamburger, *Real Encyclopædie für Bibel u. Talmud*, 1870, vol. i, s.v. "Arme und Armuth," pp. 106 and 109.

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

and were moved to tears and lamentations at the misfortune threatening the nations of the world.

Isaiah, Amos, and Jeremiah never hesitate to champion the cause of the poor and to reproach the rich, the capitalists, and the exploiters. Let us hear the cry of justice uttered by some of these social democrats of ancient Isreal.

Isa. v. 8-12 : Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land ! In mine ears, saith the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink ; that tarry late into the night till wine inflame them ! And the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe and wine, are in their feasts ; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither have they considered the operation of His hands.

Isa. x. 1, 2 : Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees and to the writers that write perverseness ; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right of the poor of my people, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey !

Jer. xxii. 13-19 : Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice ; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not his hire ; that saith, I will build me a wide house and spacious chambers, and cutteth him out windows ; and it is ceiled with cedar,

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
and painted with vermillion. Shalt thou reign, because thou strivest to excel in cedar ? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice ? then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy ; then it was well. Was not this to know Me ? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy coveteousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah : They shalt not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother ! or Ah my sister ! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord ! or, Ah his glory ! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Amos is even more violent ; anyhow, more democratic. He criticises the capitalists in language which could almost be applied to modern times.

Amos ii. 6-8 : Thus saith the Lord : For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof ; because they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes ; that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek ; and a man and his father will go unto the same maid, to profane My holy name : and they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of such as have been fined.

Amos iii. 15 : And I will smite the winter house with the summer house ; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.



## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

The ladies going to pleasure resorts, to the mountains or the lakes, spending the money their husbands have accumulated, thanks to the labour of their fellow-men, are not spared by the shepherd of Tekoa.

Amos iv. 1-3 : Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say unto their lords, Bring, and let us drink. The Lord God hath sworn by His holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your residue with fish hooks. And ye shall go out at the breaches, everyone straight before her ; and ye shall cast yourselves into Harmon, saith the Lord.

Amos v. 11 : Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat ; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them ; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof.

He was a true social democrat, this shepherd of Tekoa, who feared no one and mercilessly criticised the mighty and the rich who live on the produce of the work of the poor.

Amos vi. 1-8 : Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come ! Pass ye unto Calneh and see ; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great : then go down to Gath of the Philistines : be they better than these kingdoms ? Or is their border greater than your border ? Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near ; that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock,

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

and the calves out of the midst of the stall ; that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol ; that devise for themselves instruments of music, like David ; that drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments ; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away. The Lord God hath sworn by Himself, saith the Lord, the God of Hosts : I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces : therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

And when the herdman of Tekoa was advised to flee the country, this social democrat flatly denied that he was a prophet. No, he was a simple herdman who, touched by the misery of the proletarians, by the social and economic injustice reigning in Zion, uttered a cry of indignation and a cry for justice.

Amos vii. 10-15 : Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel : the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there : but prophesy not again any more at Bethel : for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son ; but I was an herdman, and a dresser of sycamore trees : and the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said unto me, Go prophesy unto my people Israel.

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

The merchants and financiers, the bankers evidently speculating on the fluctuations of the exchange, and the rise and fall of prices, are not spared either by the breezy shepherd of Tekoa.

Amos viii. 4-8 : Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn ? and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat ? making the ephah small and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit ; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat. The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and everyone mourn that dwelleth therein ? yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River and it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of Egypt.

With regard to Israel, the prophets constantly urged a return to the laws laid down in the *Book of Covenants*.<sup>1</sup> A strong party urging social reform was formed by the prophet Isaiah, whose programme, if realised, would have done honour to any Labour Government in modern times. After the death of Isaiah the work was continued by his followers, whom we may rightly call the Labour Party of ancient Israel. It was uphill work, however. The aristocracy and plutocracy of the time, the Conservatives, were too powerful, had control over the political, administrative, and judiciary machinery, and the prophetic Labour Party was only preaching in the desert.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xx. 22-3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. ii, p. 2.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

But towards the end of the seventh century, the social reform or Labour Party was at last successful in gaining the sympathy of the democratic King Josiah. Circumstances were now favourable for the inauguration of a Labour programme.

When Josiah was crowned king, the prophets, the social reformers of the day, triumphed and jubilated. They hoped that now the Social Reform and the Labour Party had come to stay ; that, with the assistance of the Government, an extensive programme of reforms would be realised. The ideal of the Labour Party would now become a reality.

This new Government was formed through the influence of Jeremiah, who hailed from the village of Anathoth. Hilkiash, the high-priest, was gained for the cause, and a prophetess came to his aid in the person of Houlda. The new book was nothing but the old Book of Deuteronomy, containing the Labour legislation and democratic constitution of Israel. The king gave orders that it should be read as a sort of Royal Message, or address from the throne. Whether the Ministers, priests, and prophets had made any emendation in this book is a question which belongs to the domain of Biblical criticism. It had an effect religiously, ceremonially, ritually, but hardly socially, for it is easier to reform souls than human society.

2 Kings xxii. 8-11: And Hilkiash the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiash delivered the book to Shaphan and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen that have

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

the oversight of the house of the Lord. And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

The Book of Deuteronomy was discovered in 621 B.C., and here the demands of the Social Reform, of the Democratic and Labour Party were clearly formulated. The words of Deuteronomy corroborated the demands of the prophets. An ethico-religious basis should be given to all political and economic institutions, and thus an era of social ethics inaugurated. The programme may be summed up in the following words: Remission of debts, amelioration of the state of the proletarians and labourers, moratorium of the sabbatical year, and the introduction of the jubile. This last law, if strictly observed, would have preserved the class of small peasants and made impossible the *latifundia* of the rich and powerful. The programme, however, *tout comme chez nous*, remained a pious wish, and even the king's interference was of little avail.

The address from the throne—framed by the prophetic Labour Party in power—met with an amendment, the aristocracy and plutocracy had their way, and the prophets were not listened to in their own land. The young democratic king, who favoured a Labour and almost Socialist programme, who was dreaming of being a real “*roi du peuple, roi des gueux*,” unfortunately died young, and the Conservative Party of idle rich and of powerful capitalists, the brewer-barons, if there were any, and the magnates of industry, the presidents of trusts and the princes of finance, triumphed once more.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

In 608 B.C. Joiakim ascended the throne. Judæa had a hard struggle to steer safely in the fight between Babylon and Egypt. The situation required policy and statecraft. The prophetic and democratic Labour Party strongly advised loyalty to Babylon, Judæa's ally since the days of Hezekiah. And had not Babylon saved the world from the invading hosts of Nineveh? Judæa, so the democratic prophets advised, should remain loyal to Babylon. Josiah had followed this advice, and it was in the interests of this policy that he had lost his life on the battlefield of Megiddo. Egypt was vanquished, Babylon was victorious. The King of Egypt, Necho, defeated at Carkemish, was compelled to flee from the banks of the Euphrates to those of the Nile. But the successors of Josiah did not listen to this policy. They lent an ear to the promptings of the reactionary party, who advised a pro-Egyptian policy, and believed in Egypt's promises, although it was clear that she was exhausted militarily and economically, that her credit was *nil* and her finances ruined. Instead of keeping up the alliance with Babylon, which the prophetic and democratic party had advocated, the reactionary kings followed an adverse policy and relied upon Egypt, "a broken reed." The result was the collapse of Judæa, the Babylonian captivity, and the fall of Jerusalem, the sack of the city and the burning of the temple. Joiakim, son of Josiah, acted also against the advice of the prophetic and democratic, or Labour Party, not only in foreign, but also in domestic policy. His salvation lay in economy, in cutting down expenses, in using the axe. His external debt was considerable—that is, his yearly tribute to the King of Egypt. A strict economy was, therefore, imperative. Waste should have been avoided; but no policy of that sort



## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

was inaugurated. The Government of Judah spent the nation's money on public works and palaces, probably as a remedy against unemployment, but, alas ! it compelled the labourers to toil and paid them no wages. And the prophet Jeremiah, another Labour leader of antiquity, did not hesitate to thunder against and to denounce such iniquity. " Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice ; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not his hire." <sup>1</sup>

Thus the hope of a social reorganisation of Israel was only a short-lived illusion. The social reformers in Israel of the seventh century B.C. soon convinced themselves that it was futile to fight against the united and organised forces of Conservatism and Capitalism. The political world was too much engrossed in material gain and selfishness and refused to lend an ear to the claims of the proletariat, of social democracy, and of Labour. The Gospel of Labour had been preached in vain, and the political and economic ruin of the country was the result.

Israel went into exile. The lower classes of society had become very poor, the productive labouring-class had been ruined by enormous taxes which were partly used to pay the foreign debt—*tribute*, it was then called—and war-indemnities to Babylon, and at last the kingdom of Judah collapsed, about a century or more after the fall of the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel.

In the midst of the fifth century B.C. the children of Israel returned from their Babylonian captivity, and once more the rich Jews, like the Bourbons more than twenty centuries later, had learned nothing and forgotten nothing in exile. Once more they began to

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxii. 13-19.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
oppress the poor and the proletarians, and provoked popular risings. The proletarians uttered a cry which has been re-echoed through centuries. Labour and Poverty claimed their rights.

Neh. v. 1-15: Then there arose a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons and our daughters, are many: let us get corn that we may eat and live. Some also there were that said, We are mortgaging our fields, and our vineyards and our houses: let us get corn because of the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute upon our fields and our vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought into bondage already: neither is it in our power to help it; for other men have our fields and our vineyards. And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with myself, and contended with the nobles and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, everyone of his brother. And I held a great assembly against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and would ye even sell your brethren, and should they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace and found never a word. Also I said, The thing that ye do is not good: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? And I likewise, my brethren and my servants, do lend them money and corn on usury. I pray you let us leave off this usury. Restore I pray you to them even

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

this day, their fields, their vineyards, their olive yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil that ye exact of them. Then said they, We will restore them and will require nothing of them ; so will we do even as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise ; even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise. Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that were before me were chargeable unto the people, and took of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver ; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people : but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

It was a cry which has been repeated in every country throughout the ages, under kings and presidents, in Monarchies and in Republics, under all sorts and conditions of governments and political constitutions, from Absolutism to Republic, and from Tsardom to Bolshevism. Esra, and especially Nehemiah, however, took up the reins of government and were successful in establishing certain economic ameliorations. The social reforms, recommended in the Book of Covenants, were introduced, although the jubile year was not observed. Soon, however, under the influence of Hellenism, the rich once more forgot the law and again exerted their pressure upon the debtors, seized the estates of the small landowners and



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

increased their own. The national movement inaugurated by the Maccabees broke the power of the Syrian oppressors, and once more Israel returned for a short time to the social and economic conditions outlined in the Pentateuch, and in such passionate and inspired words by the prophets, those apostles of Labour and Democracy.

Judæa soon fell under the sway of Rome, and whilst the rich enjoyed all sorts of privileges, the lot of the poor, of the labourer, and of the unemployed became worse and worse.

And yet, although the gospel of social justice and of equality, of social reform, protection of the labouring and disinherited classes, had been continually preached by the prophets, there never was any tendency on their part to introduce communistic ideas, nor was any attempt made to establish communism of property in a practical manner. Currents of anarchic individualism may be noticed here and there,<sup>1</sup> social justice and equality, democracy and labour occupy a prominent place in the teaching of the prophets, but communistic ideas were not compatible with the Jewish spirit of individualism.

From India, however, asceticism had penetrated into Judæa and found many adherents. Asceticism and the resignation of terrestrial possessions naturally leads to community of property. It was practised by the Essenes. Josephus gives the following descriptions of this Jewish sect :

“ These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence and the conquest over our passions

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. Adler, *Geschichte des Kommunismus und Sozialismus von Plato bis zur Gegenwart*, 1899, p. 61.

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons' children while they are pliable, and fit for learning ; and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued ; but they guard against the lascivious behaviour of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.

“ These men are despisers of riches, and so very communicative as raises our admiration. Nor is there anyone to be found among them who hath more than another ; for it is a law among them. That those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, insomuch that among them all there is no appearance of poverty or excess of riches, but every one's possessions are intermingled with every other's possessions ; and so there is as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren ; they think that oil is a defilement, and if any one of them be anointed, without his own approbation, it is wiped off his body ; for they think to be sweaty is a good thing, as they do also to be clothed in white garments. They also have stewards appointed to take care of their common affairs, who every one of them have no separate business for any but what is for the use of them all.

“ They have no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city ; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own ; and they go into such as they never knew before, as if they had been ever so long acquainted with them. For which reason they carry nothing at all with them when they travel into remote parts, though still they take their weapons with them, for fear of thieves. Accordingly there is,

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

in every city where they live, one appointed particularly to take care of strangers and to provide garments and other necessities for them. But the habit and management of their bodies is such as children use who are in fear of their masters. Nor do they allow of the change of garments, or of shoes, till they be first entirely torn to pieces, or worn out by time. Nor do they either buy or sell anything to one another ; but every one of them gives what he hath to him that wanteth it, and receives from him again in lieu of it what may be convenient for himself ; and although there be no requital made, they are fully allowed to take what they want of whomsoever they please.

“ And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary, for before sunrising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising. After this every one of them are sent away by their curators, to exercise some of those arts wherein they are skilled, in which they labour with great diligence till the fifth hour. After which they assemble themselves together again into one place ; and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water. And after this purification is over they every one meet together in an apartment of their own, into which it is not permitted to any of another sect to enter ; while they go, after a pure manner, into the dining-room, as into a certain holy temple, and quietly set themselves down ; upon which the baker lays them loaves in order, the cook also brings a single plate of one sort of food, and sets it before every one of them ; but a priest says grace before meat ; and it is unlawful for anyone to taste of the food before grace be said. The same priest, when



## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

he hath dined, says grace again after meat ; and when they begin, and when they end, they praise God, as He that bestows their food upon them ; after which they lay aside their (white) garments, and betake themselves to their labours again till the evening ; then they return home to supper, after the same manner ; and if there be any strangers there, they sit down with them. Nor is there ever any clamour or disturbance to pollute their house, but they give every one leave to speak in their turn, which silence, thus kept in their house, appears to foreigners like some tremendous mystery ; the cause of which is, that perpetual sobriety they exercise, and the same settled measure of meat and drink that is allotted them and that such as is abundantly sufficient for them.

“ And truly, as for other things, they do nothing but according to the injunctions of their curators ; only these two things are done among them at everyone’s own free will, which are to assist those that want it, and to show mercy ; for they are permitted of their own accord to afford succour to such as deserve it, when they stand in need of it, and to bestow food on those that are in distress ; but they cannot give anything to their kindred without the curators. They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace : whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath ; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury ; for they say that he who cannot believe without God is already condemned. They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body ; and they inquire after such roots and medicinal stones as may cure their distempers.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

“ But now, if anyone hath a mind to come over to their sect he is not immediately admitted, but he is prescribed the same method of living which they use for a year, while he continues excluded : and they give him also a small hatchet, and the forementioned girdle and the white garment. And when he hath given evidence, during that time, that he can observe their continence, he approaches nearer to their way of living, and is made a partaker of the waters of purification ; yet is he not even now admitted to live with them, for after this demonstration of his fortitude, his temper is tried two more years, and if he appear to be worthy, they then admit him into their society. And before he is allowed to touch their common food, he is obliged to take tremendous oaths ; that, in the first place, he will exercise piety towards God, and then, that he will observe justice towards men ; and that he will do no harm to anyone, either of his own accord or by the command of others ; that he will always hate the wicked, and be assistant to the righteous ; that he will ever show fidelity to all men, and especially to those in authority ; because no one obtains the government without God’s assistance ; and that if he be in authority, he will at no time whatever abuse his authority, nor endeavour to outshine his subjects, either in his garments, or any other finery ; that he will be perpetually a lover of truth, and propose to himself to reprove those that tell lies ; that he will keep his hands clear from theft, and his soul from unlawful gains ; and that he will neither conceal anything from those of his own sect nor discover any of their doctrines to others, no, not though anyone should compel him so to do at the hazard of his life. Moreover, he swears to communicate their doctrines to no one any otherwise than as he received them himself ;



## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

that he will abstain from robbery, and will equally preserve the books belonging to their sect, and the names of the angels (for messengers). These are the oaths by which they secure their proselytes to themselves.

“ But for those that are caught in any heinous sins, they cast them out of their society ; and he who is thus separated from them does often die after a miserable manner ; for as he is bound by the oath he hath taken, and by the customs he hath been engaged in, he is not at liberty to partake of that food that he meets with elsewhere, but is forced to eat grass, and to famish his body with hunger till he perish ; for which reason they receive many of them again when they are at the last gasp, out of compassion to them, as thinking the miseries they have endured, till they came to the very brink of death, to be a sufficient punishment for the sins they had been guilty of.

“ But in the judgments they exercise they are most accurate and just ; nor do they pass sentence by the votes of a Court that is fewer than a hundred. And as to what is once determined by that number, it is unalterable. What they most of all honour, after God Himself, is the name of their legislator (Moses) whom, if anyone blaspheme, he is punished capitally. They also think it is a good thing to obey their elders, and the major part. Accordingly, if ten of them be sitting together, no one of them will speak while the other nine are against it. They also avoid spitting in the midst of them, or on the right side. Moreover they are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting from their labours on the seventh day ; for they not only get their food ready the day before, that they may not be obliged to kindle a fire on that day, but they will not remove any vessel out of its place, nor



go to stool thereon. Nay, on other days they dig a small pit, a foot deep, with a paddle (which kind of hatchet is given them when they are first admitted among them); and covering themselves round with their garment, that they may not affront the Divine rays of light, they ease themselves into that pit, after which they put the earth that was dug out again into the pit; and even this they do only in the more lonely places, which they choose out for this purpose; and although this easement of the body be natural, yet it is a rule with them to wash themselves after it, as if it were a defilement to them.

“ Now after the time of their preparatory trial is over, they are parted into four classes; and so far are the juniors inferior to the seniors, that if the seniors should be touched by the juniors, they must wash themselves, as if they had intermixed themselves with the company of a foreigner. They are long-lived also insomuch that many of them live above a hundred years, by means of the simplicity of their diet; nay, as I think by means of the regular course of life they observe also. They contemn the miseries of life, and are above pain, by the generosity of their mind. And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living always; and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they had in their trials wherein, although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either of them, no, nor once to flatter their tormentors, or to shed a tear; but they smiled in their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who inflicted the torments upon them, and resigned up

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

their souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again.

“ For their doctrine is this : That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent ; but that the souls are immortal, and continue for ever, and that they come out of the most subtile air, and are united to their bodies as to prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement ; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this like the opinion of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain, or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle breathing of a west wind, that is perpetually blowing from the ocean ; while they allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never-ceasing punishments. And, indeed, the Greeks seem to me to have followed the same notion, when they allot the islands of the blessed to their brave men, whom they call heroes and demi-gods ; and to the souls of the wicked, the region of the ungodly, in Hades, where their fables relate that certain persons, such as Sisyphus and Tantalus, and Ixion and Tipyus, are punished ; which is built on the first suppositions, that souls are immortal ; and thence are those exhortations to virtue, and dehortations from wickedness, collected, whereby good men are bettered in the conduct of their life by the hope they have of reward after their death, and whereby the vehement inclinations of bad men to vice are restrained, by the fear and expectation they are in, that although they should lie concealed in this life, they should suffer immortal punishment after their death. These are the Divine doctrines of the

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Essenes about the soul, which lay an unavoidable bait for such as have once had a taste of their philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

“ The doctrine of the Essenes is this : That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for, and when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple they do not offer sacrifices, because they have more pure lustrations of their own ; on which they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves ; yet is their course of life better than that of other men, and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry. It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that addict themselves to virtue, and this in righteousness : and indeed to such a degree, that as it hath never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor Barbarians, no not for a little time, so hath it endured for a long while among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not suffer anything to hinder them from having all things in common ; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who hath nothing at all. There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants ; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels ; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another. They also appoint certain stewards to receive the incomes of their revenues, and of the fruits of the ground ; such as are good men and priests, who are to get their corn and their food ready for them. They none of them differ from others of the Essenes in their

<sup>1</sup> Josephus (Whiston), *Wars*, bk. ii, ch. viii.



## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

way of living, but do the most resemble those Dacæ who are called Poliste (dwellers in cities.)

“ But of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions ; but they have an inviolable attachment to Liberty ; and say that God is to be their only ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord ; and since this immovable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no further about the matter ; nor am I afraid that any thing I have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear that what I have said is beneath the resolution they show when they undergo pain ; and it was in Gessius Florus’s time that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator, and who occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans, and these are the sects of Jewish philosophy.”<sup>1</sup>

The communism of the Essenes was thus a communism of consumption, not of production, i.e. everyone earned his living by some trade—taking for himself only the bare necessities of life and sharing the remainder with his companions. For the first time in history an attempt had thus been made to found a community based not only on social ethics, social justice, equality, and dignity of labour, but also on consumption in common. It succeeded well, because its members were influenced by a spirit of religion, of morality and altruism. Love of their fellow-men, altruism, contentment with their lot in life, discipline and laboriousness, were among the characteristic traits

<sup>1</sup> Josephus (Whiston), *Antiquities*, bk. xviii, ch. i.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

of the Essenes. Only such men to whom the idea of striving after power was unknown, who distinguished communism from the *will to power*, men who were free from worldly ambition and greed, ready to perform any service for the benefit of their fellow-men without dreaming of *dictating to them*, could make an attempt and establish a community based on consumption in common. There is a wide gap between these ancient saintly men, these benevolent bachelors of antiquity, and the modern leaders of communistic movements, who, after twenty centuries, have made an attempt to revive the Essenian doctrine.

The Essenians stood morally high, they lived and moved and had their being in religion and morality. Material possessions and wealth were but of little value in their eyes. They were idealists, perhaps dreamers, who loved humanity; they were martyrs of an idea looking to a *beyond*.

How can men, permeated by a spirit of atheism, of a material conception of history, or a *will to power*, of a desire to rule, dictate, and command, men who have undermined the very foundations of morality and of religion, who believe *ni à Dieu ni au diable*, imagine that they, too, can introduce, by sheer horror, an era of communism, a State or a city in which, as Rousseau already said, only angels could dwell?

The Essenes, it must also be borne in mind, were real Jews, not modern rotten branches of the old tree. They were imbued with the spirit of the prophets, inspired by a love of humanity, by a real desire to protect the widow and the orphan, the landless, the disinherited, the lowly, and the labourer. They could attempt to carry into effect a gospel of labour, of social and economic equality, and even of communism. It is holy ground, and anyone approaching it but is not

## SOCIAL GOSPEL OF HEBREW PROPHETS

holy himself, will be destroyed. When anyone preaches the gospel of communism, we have a right to investigate his motives and to tear the veil from his private life, and then, lo ! in most cases he stands revealed as a false prophet, as the prophet of Baal and Mammon, and not of the true God. *Sapienti sat.*





# LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TALMUD

"But it was from Judæa that there arose the most persistent protests against inequality and the most ardent aspirations after justice that have ever raised humanity out of the actual into the ideal. We feel the effect still. It is thence has come that leaven of revolution which still moves the world. . . . Israel's prophets, while thundering against iniquity, announced the good time coming."

E. DE LAVELEYE,  
*Socialism of To-day.*



## CHAPTER VI

### LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TALMUD

THE Old Testament glorifies labour, encourages man to toil, to acquire and to enjoy the fruits of his work. It was natural that in a society based upon social justice and democracy, where everyone is encouraged to work, where labour is not held in contempt but is dignified, it should be considered a grievous sin and a crime against the individual and against society to use human labour without adequately remunerating it.<sup>1</sup> When the democratic equality had disappeared, and an unscrupulous, greedy, pleasure-loving aristocracy and plutocracy had ousted the small farmers from their possessions and turned them into hired labourers and slaves, in short, when capitalism had crushed labour under its iron heel, then the prophets came forth and announced their social message. Living among the poor,<sup>2</sup> they understood their sufferings and sympathised with their claims for social and economic justice.

We have seen that the author of the Pentateuch had raised a thoroughly democratic structure, and had promulgated special laws for the protection of the lowly and of the oppressed, the proletarians and the workingmen. We have also seen how the prophets had thundered against oppression of the poor by the rich,

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. xiv. 30, 32.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

how they had spoken and acted in the interests of labour against capitalism, of democracy against aristocracy and plutocracy. It was quite natural that the leader of a labour movement, the prophet who had received the Divine call to set free the captives of compulsory labour in Egypt, should have had sympathy with labour, and respect for labour, that he should have placed upon an equal social footing the working-man, selling his services, and his economically-favoured employer. It was natural that the legislator should have endeavoured to give every protection to the former.

But the Sages of the Talmud teach a similar doctrine. They esteem honest toil and manual labour, and prove their convictions in word and deed. Theoretical study and practical pursuits were, according to the Sages of the Talmud, the best method by which man could attain social happiness.<sup>1</sup>

A contemplative life, the life of idleness of the Buddhists, the Yogi, and the Fakir, was impossible for the active Jew. Even the Essenes were physically active. Industry and love of labour are, therefore, highly praised in the Talmud. The Sages of the Talmud explain that Adam lived in paradise not to be idle, but to work (Gen. ii. 15). After his fall, his work became more strenuous, but it is still considered as a blessing.

Even when the belief in resurrection, in a life beyond the tomb, had penetrated the consciousness of Israel, even at a time when political misfortunes and social misery warranted a pessimism and a refuge to another life, even then the Rabbis of the Talmud did not lose their faith in life and progress. They did not seek consolation in mysticism, in renunciation, and in

<sup>1</sup> *Pesachim*, 118a.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TALMUD

negation of life, but in labour and progress. They did not curse the world as synonymous with sin, cooling their burning brows in the icy atmosphere of pessimism and contempt of the world. Some may call it a characteristic trait of materialism, others will see in it a trait of life, of progress and humanity. "Till the earth and subdue nature," constantly resounded in the ears of Israel, who obeyed this Divine precept by glorifying work and labour. Labour and industry, creative and productive work, the producers of national wealth, are glorified and justly appreciated. And as a consequence of such a conception the working-classes have always been cared for—and the laws were always shaped in such a way as to prevent the excessive abuse of labour by capital.

The Rabbis of the Talmud interpret life, which Moses advised Israel to choose, as meaning industry.<sup>1</sup> The words of Solomon, "Choose life with the woman you love" (Eccles. ix. 9), the Rabbis interpreted as meaning *labour* and the *law*, which should never be separated.<sup>2</sup> The very word of "labour" is supposed to have been sanctified by the Creator, who used it to designate creation.<sup>3</sup>

The Talmud sets a high value on work, and ranks it with the study of the *Thora*, that is, the most devoted study,<sup>4</sup> and equally condemns idleness as a serious crime. The man who lives by the labour of his hands stands as morally high as he who passes his life in devout prayer and contemplation, if not higher.

For the same reason that it is the duty of a man to carry on his species (marriage being a social necessity), it is the duty of the father to teach an honest trade to

<sup>1</sup> *Talmud Jerusalem, Kidd*, ch. i. Deut. xxx. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Midrash Kohelet, Ecclesiastes*. ix. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Aboth di Rabbi Nathan*, xi.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

his son.<sup>1</sup> By neglecting this duty he incurs a great responsibility, both to God and his fellow-men, should the son turn out badly.<sup>2</sup>

A man who forbids his wife to work is obliged to separate from her ; for it is foreseen that idleness is conducive to licentiousness.<sup>3</sup>

The Talmud quotes as follows from Genesis to support the principle that no one has a right to enjoy the fruits of the earth who refuses to take his part in the cultivation of the soil or assist by some other social activity : " God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it." Then comes the following verse to complete the idea : " Thou mayest eat of the fruit of the trees and garden," so he says work was to precede enjoyment.<sup>4</sup>

" It is good for a man to associate the exercise of his trade with the study of the Law." <sup>5</sup> Rabbi Semaya says : " Love work, hate power (do not have ambitious longing for power), and do not put yourself forward so as to be among the great ones." <sup>6</sup> After God had told Adam that the ground should bring forth thorns and thistles, poor sinning Adam wept, full of sorrow, and with a choking voice, humbly asked his Judge : " Am I and my ass to eat from the same rack ? " and God, to comfort him, replied : " In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread," and Adam's anguish was assuaged.

Only he who works is, therefore, entitled to the fruits and the products of labour.

The most eminent teachers and Rabbis were workmen and proud of their status. " Skin a carcass in

<sup>1</sup> *Kiddushin*, 30b.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 29a.

<sup>3</sup> *Kitub*, 59c.

<sup>4</sup> *Aboth di Rabbi Nathan*, xl.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, li. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TALMUD

the open thoroughfare and be paid for your work ; say not, I am a great man and ashamed to work," is a saying in the Talmud.<sup>1</sup>

The famous Rabbi Hillel was a mason by profession, Rabbi Jochanan a cobbler, Rabbi Isaak a smith, just as at a later period Jesus was a carpenter and St. Paul, or Rabbi Saul, as he was called before his conversion, was a tentmaker. We have only to refer to the advice given to parents to teach their sons a craft, for "he who neglects this advice brings up his son as a robber,"<sup>2</sup> meaning that he would become a drag upon society. In the Ethics of the Fathers<sup>3</sup> man is told "to love work and to hate idleness." It is interesting to notice that, according to ancient Jewish law an idler could not act as a witness in a court of law.<sup>4</sup> Were this law to be applied in a modern State, nearly all the witnesses for either the accusation or the defence in many a law-case would be invalidated. Professional gamblers, too, were excluded, because their occupation was not productive.<sup>5</sup>

The Talmud is full of regulations concerning labour, the hours of labour, the rights of labour, and the privileges of labour. Roman law paid but little attention to this question, for the simple reason that Roman law was the law of the masters, an aristocratic law, whilst the law of the Pentateuch and of the Talmud is a democratic law. Nietzsche would have described the former as master-law and the latter as slave-law. The purpose of the Roman law was to protect the man of property, the purpose of the Jewish law was to protect the labourer and the proletarian. It was, as

<sup>1</sup> *Baba Bathra*, 110a.

<sup>2</sup> *Kiddushin*, 30b.

<sup>3</sup> i. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Kiddushin*, 40b.

<sup>5</sup> D. Farbstein, *Das Recht der unfreien und der freien Arbeiter nach jüdisch-talmudischen Recht*, 1896, p. 9.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Farbstein<sup>1</sup> has pointed out, a labour legislation, framed by men of toil and of labour. Just as the prophets had preached the gospel of labour, so did the Jewish lawyers and K.C.'s of the Talmud. They were labourmen, that is to say, not rich representatives of labour, living on their incomes and taking up the cause of labour to further their ambitious designs, but workmen, journeymen, and half-timers who lived and moved and had their being among working-men, understanding the claims of labour and with a thorough sympathy for the working-classes.

If all men work, each in his own sphere, each contributing to the welfare of society and to the national wealth, if there are no idlers, and, moreover if everybody's work is equally appreciated, only then can one speak of a real equality, of democracy, and of a social justice. The idea of a new society has been preached centuries ago, before Labour or Liberal, Conservative or Communist parties were known in the West, before the red Lords ruled in the Kremlin and in the name of the prophets of Communism trampled liberty underfoot and freedom under their heels, crushed the oppressed and accumulated wealth in the name of the deceived proletariat. This gospel of a new society, where all would work and contribute their share to the social progress, where all would be equal, was foreshadowed centuries ago by a member of the Academy of Jabné.

The Academy of Jabné asserted precisely that work is the leveller of all social distinctions, lessening the antagonism of class, preventing the clash of rival interests, causing the asperities arising from covetousness, envy and jealousy to disappear, and rounding

<sup>1</sup> Farbstein, loc. cit.



LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TALMUD

the angles in the general intercourse between man and man. "I"—so speaks the Sage—"am a being endowed with intelligence, and my neighbour (labourer or artisan) is so likewise ; my work is carried on in the town, his in the town or the country ; I am diligent and zealous in my work, and he is not less so ; he would feel no pride in taking up my task, nor I shame in taking up his ; if told that my work is nobler and more important than his, I reply that our teachers have taught us that it is presumptuous to classify occupations according to their importance in the eyes of men, for all concur in helping forward the welfare of society, and therefore each has an equal merit, provided that the task is inspired by good intentions and honestly carried out."<sup>1</sup>

The Talmud is severe and does not hesitate to assert that "Man dies as the result of laziness only."<sup>2</sup> One of its fixed maxims is that the poor should not refuse work even of the lowest kind, but take it rather than accept alms, for this degrades a man far more than the most servile work. "Make up your mind, if it must be so, to skin carrion, even in the market-place, that you may have wherewith to keep yourself ; and do not say, I am too good for an occupation of that kind."<sup>3</sup>

The Jewish law, as we know, looks upon the Sabbath as a religious institution, and the faithful are ordered to observe it both in dress, food, and speech. The Talmud, notwithstanding, recommends the Sabbath to be treated as a workday, rather than appeal to charity, or accept it in order to preserve its sanctity.<sup>4</sup> "It is better to work for an idolater, than to remain

<sup>1</sup> *Berachoth*, 17a : see also Amitai, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> *Aboth di Rabbi Nathan*, xi.

<sup>3</sup> *Baba Bathra*, 110a.

<sup>4</sup> *Sabbat*, 118b.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

idle and count on the charitable assistance of others.”<sup>1</sup>  
“ A man ought to prefer a life of poverty and privation, rather than ease procured by asking for public assistance.”

A “ Talmid Chacham ” (learned in the law) would rather submit to the roughest and most ill-reputed work than have recourse to begging.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Rabbis of the Talmud, although mostly working-men and artisans themselves, are decidedly opposed to what we may call *Poplarism*. They have harder things yet to say—“ Justice will avenge itself on one who asks for charity instead of working, for ere his life is ended he will know real poverty and come to beg for a crust of bread ” ; and again : “ one who simulates an infirmity in order to awake pity will assuredly be stricken later by that same infirmity.” A man should be content without asking for further assistance, if he can earn his keep from day to day.

I will add a few more quotations in support of the principles here set forth :

“ There is no trade nor profession that may not equally produce riches or poverty.”<sup>3</sup>

“ God gives to each the bread he deserves, and which he knows to be most appropriate and most profitable to his individuality.”<sup>4</sup>

Not only are the Rabbis of the Talmud in favour of the dignity of labour, they are also real social-democrats. They assert sorrowfully that for many men the earning of their daily bread is as difficult a problem as that of saving the world, or cleaving the Red Sea. It is not in man's power to satisfy his longing and his ambition for the goods of this world, and we

<sup>1</sup> *Baba Bathra*, 110a.

<sup>2</sup> *Yore Deah*, *Hilkhot Zedaka*, 255.

<sup>3</sup> *Kiddushin*, 82a.

<sup>4</sup> *Pesachim*, 118a.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TALMUD

have no right to look down on a poor workman who has failed to make his fortune. If he has faithfully performed his work to the best of his ability, he has, from the moral and the social points of view, fulfilled his duty, and is as worthy of consideration, and justly more so, than the man whose only merit is having been born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Can we ask for a more clearly-expressed sentiment in favour of social democracy ?

The Rabbis of the Talmud pay special attention to the relations of employer and employed. According to the Talmud, the employer and the employed are two parties of a civil contract ; they are reciprocally dependent upon one another, with the single difference that, as the workman is the weaker of the two parties, *he has right to a greater measure of protection*. And so, in any case of dispute between master and man as regards wages, it is to the benefit of the latter that the law should decide, if he can swear that the amount in question is due to him, that is to say, that the oath is deferred to him.

If we consider the failure of the one who serves, either perforce or of his free will, with regard to his master, we become aware of the full beauty of the Jewish laws, which differ from the legislation of the ancient world and present a marked contrast to those of the Greeks and the Romans.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the latter, according to their laws, place slaves on the level with domestic animals, and whilst Aristotle is capable of the enormity of asserting that Nature herself has established two classes of human beings, one to command, the other to obey, and that in Lacedaemonia a slave could claim no more rights in his relationship to his master than a beast of burden

<sup>1</sup> Amitai, loc. cit., and Farbstein, loc. cit.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

from his drover, the Jewish law, the Bible and the Talmud, admits no distinction between master and slave. There was to be the same table, the same sleeping-place, the same maintenance of the family on one side as the other, the same absolute rest on the Sabbath, with the additional injunction that the day on which the slave, having completed his term of service, left his master, the latter was to bestow on his former servitor an abundance of gifts of all sorts. In a word, the treatment of slaves was humane, even kindly.

The rank of the slave in ancient Israel was very little inferior to his master, he was almost his equal ; he is referred to as " this brother " ; the word " slave " as expressive of a subordinate dependent, of a pariah, of a man of inferior race or degraded caste, finds no place in the Hebrew language. The word " ebed," used for slave, is derived from the verb " ébéd," which signifies " to serve," and is employed to designate any person who renders service or devotes himself to another.<sup>1</sup> Persons of high rank in the State or of social importance felt it no offence to be called such : Moses, David, and many others called themselves " ebed adonai " (God's slaves or servants), and even gloried in the name. The " ebed " was to be treated like the day-worker ; with both the length of service was limited ; in the latter case to a day, with power to continue it indefinitely ; in the former case to a term not exceeding six years.<sup>2</sup>

As for the unemployed, the Rabbis of the Talmud understood the shamed feelings of men out of work, and they say : " As soon as a man begins to live on

<sup>1</sup> See above, chap. iv, and Hamburger, loc. cit., s.u. *Shlaverei*.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. xxv, 40.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TALMUD

charity, his whole aspect changes, his face takes on a new expression.”<sup>1</sup> “For the necessitous, life has lost all charm; it ceases to have any value when he who suffers hunger is forced to sit at another’s table.”<sup>2</sup>

“He who is obliged to hold out a beggar’s hand loses the brightness of his eyes, his sight becomes dulled” (id.). “But what is a man to do if he is incapable of work; is he to be left to perish of hunger?”<sup>3</sup>

For this class of poor, both the legal and the poetic passages of the Bible are full of compassion and consideration. As we have seen, Jewish legislation aimed at the prevention of economic inequality, but, as poverty cannot be wholly eliminated, the law ordered that a tithe should be given to the poor every third year; they had already the right to a corner of the fields, to pickings and gleanings, to gathering of fruit every seventh year and in the year of jubile, and to a profusion of gifts on the Sabbath, the feast days, and so on.

Not content, however, with the exercise of a rigid justice, the Jewish Rabbis ask for something more: for charity and mercy, for kindness and consideration on the part of the employer. Law has its fixed limits, love is boundless—Jerusalem was destroyed, says the Talmud,<sup>4</sup> because its inhabitants were bound by the strict laws of justice, and never those of love to enlarge their boundaries. “In forming your judgments, and in the practice of daily life, you must allow mercy to take the place of justice.” At the Judgment Day, the first question that will be asked of each one will be, “Have you, in your relations with your fellow-

<sup>1</sup> *Berachot*, 72a.

<sup>2</sup> *Beza*, 32b.

<sup>3</sup> *Kiddushin*, 82a.

<sup>4</sup> *Baba Meziab*, 30b.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
creatures, acted according to the dictates of charity? ”<sup>1</sup>  
“ The exploitation of the worker is considered a crime  
in every way equal to murder.”<sup>2</sup>

“ The employer should always bear in mind that the  
workman often risks his life in return for a meagre  
wage.”

<sup>1</sup> *Sabbat*, 31a.

<sup>2</sup> *Baba Meziab*, 112a.



LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE



## CHAPTER VII

### LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

IT is customary for us moderns to speak of our great debt to Hellas, of the glory that was Greece—and to express our appreciation of that legacy bequeathed to us by Greece. Modern civilisation is still feeding upon the crumbs of the inheritance we have received from Greece.

The Greeks were a privileged race, and not only in modern times, but also in antiquity, they were praised perhaps beyond their real merit. Thus Cicero said that Greece had taught the nations gentleness and humanity.<sup>1</sup> The gods chose the Greek nation as their favourite.<sup>2</sup> "C'est là (in Greece), c'est là que je voudrais mourir," sings a French poet. Plato describes the genius of the Greek nation as "a curious spirit thirsty for knowledge."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Greece exercised a profound influence upon the world of thought, for in that small peninsula intellectual culture was the patrimony of every citizen, and not of a privileged caste. Greece taught the world art and beauty, logic and metaphysics. The Greek world was a world of art, and the characteristic trait of Greek life was that of beauty, wherein everything else was merged.

It is, however, only just to add that in Greece virtue was applied to political virtue alone, and that Greece

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *Ad Quint*, i. 1, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Jacobs, *Erziehung der Hellenen zur Sittlichkeit*, vol. iii, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Republic*, iv. 435 E.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

never gave prominence to that idea of social justice which is the characteristic trait of the Old and New Testaments. Greece, too, like Judaism, knew no caste system.<sup>1</sup> The free citizen was the equal of the free citizen, but very few were free. Free were only those who had a right to take part in public affairs, but to have part in public affairs; to govern, one had to be free from the cares and worries of daily existence. Leisure was the hall-mark of the Greek citizen, and leisure presupposed labour thrown on the shoulders of others, working-men and slaves. The Greek democracy was thus based upon a social inequality, and postulated the distinction between those who work and those who reap the benefit.

George Henry Lewes has already pointed out that the conception of humanitarianism was quite foreign to Greek ethics.<sup>2</sup> Greece, it is true, taught the world beauty, but beauty, after all, is only one of the luxuries of life. Israel, and afterwards Christianity, taught the world religion, the consolation of millions. They taught morality and humanitarianism, and proclaimed the principles of social justice, equality of men, and democracy. That these principles laid down in the Old Testament and in the Gospels have not been, and are not, observed by either Jew or Christian is a sad fact, but does not diminish the moral superiority of Holy Scripture. We must never confound Christianity with Christians, or Judaism with Jews, just, perhaps, as little as one is entitled to interchange the terms Socialism and Socialists.

I do not hesitate, therefore, to say that whilst Greece gave the world the luxuries of life, Israel gave the world the necessities of life, the bread of life. Greece tried

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> George Henry Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, i. p. 408.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

to make the world beautiful for the leisured classes ; Israel and Christianity endeavoured to make the world a place fit to live in for the honest and the toiling masses. That is, perhaps, the reason why leisured classes all the world over longingly look to Greece, why, with Hegel they exclaim : " If it were permitted to feel a yearning, it would be for such a land." <sup>1</sup> But the working-classes, the toiling masses, will always turn their eyes towards Jerusalem. It is not at Athens, at the Academy and in the Porch, that the gospel of labour and of real democracy was preached, but in Judæa and in Galilee, by a shepherd of Tekoa and by a carpenter of Nazareth. We have received from Greece many beautiful ideas and philosophic truths, but we have also received from Greece that famous conception of master-morality and the idea that freedom meant the right to rule and to govern.<sup>2</sup> It is this idea which prompts us so frequently to look down upon those whom fortune has not favoured economically. Greece is said to have paid with complete annihilation for a hundred years of democracy,<sup>3</sup> but Greece never was a real democracy. It is more just to say that Greece was doomed to decay, and paid the penalty of contradiction which existed between her political and her social democracies.

The Greek constitutions and life in Greece were based upon aristocracy and slavery, upon a contempt for labour, and especially manual work.

*The Aristocratic Regime and Slavery.*—The essential functions of the aristocracy were government and war,<sup>4</sup> and Plato, in his *Republic*, was not too far from the Greek reality in confiding the public affairs to the superior classes.

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. i, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Melamed, loc. cit., p. 37, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> Blackie, *Democracy*.

<sup>4</sup> Guiraud, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, February 1, 1902.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Aristocracy exercised the power without sharing it, and it defended the country with the assistance of the rest of the population. It owed itself entirely to the State ; its civil and military obligations took precedence over all duties, and in consequence its members were perpetually exposed to be requisitioned for some public service. It was necessary then that it should be freed from all the annoyances of existence, to be always ready to respond to this appeal from the city.

Slavery offered it. For a long time it was the custom to employ slaves on the land. Athens employed them still more when little by little it turned away from the cultivation of the land. Formerly it demanded from the class only auxiliaries ; from this time it left almost all the work to them. It is at this time that the commerce of slaves began to be organised : the importation of these workers was accomplished in a manner every day more regular ; markets for men were opened almost everywhere, and the proprietors could procure all the personnel that they needed. There was such a sufficiency of workers that they came to change the methods of the exploitation of the ground : they cleared the forests and waste land, they sowed grain and planted vines where up to this time there were only pasture-lands and brushwood, and it is not doubtful that this great change was not for a large part executed by the manual labour of slaves.

In Attica they followed a different procedure. In this country, the land in the seventh century was entirely bought up by the rich, who gave over the exploitation of it to the class of " Pelates." These were not slaves, neither serfs, but free men who cultivated the land of others by virtue of a contract subscribed to voluntarily. They returned to the owner five-sixths of the fruits of the earth, and kept



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

for themselves only one-sixth. One has some difficulty to believe that the share of the cultivator was so deficient ; but the evidence of Aristotle is explicit on this point. The condition of the holders was very precarious. When the harvest was bad, it was impossible for them to pay the rent ; they saw themselves even forced to solicit advances more than once, and at the moment of the falling due they could not always pay their debt. In this case, the creditor had the right to take the debtor into his house and to condemn him to work for his account until the whole account was paid, unless he preferred to sell him as a slave to a stranger. The poetry of Solon attests that this was not an empty menace.

The struggle against usury was the greatest popular preoccupation. The people perceived only one remedy for these ills, that was the sharing of the land. The legislator did not go so far : he limited himself to liquidating the past by the total abolition of debts, and for the future he forbade lenders to take their securities by means of the persons of the debtors.

Attica is the only country of Greece where one notices this sort of tenure, but it would be very strange if it were the only one to know it, and it is probable that at about the same time other cities too practised it.

Slavery, serfdom, " colonat," these are three means that the rich Greeks had at their disposition to escape from the work in the fields without doing damage to their interests. Even if they rested with their arms crossed, they were assured in this way that their lands would not remain unproductive and that they would draw from them a normal revenue. An unfavourable prejudice was attached to the cultivation of the land from the moment when it was given over into the

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

hands of slaves and mercenaries, and imperceptibly they were accustomed to lay the burden on the lower classes. They preferred to consecrate themselves to occupations more elevated—war and politics—and it was a sign of nobility to do nothing. When the philosophers of former centuries insisted with so much energy on the advantages of idleness, they were the echo of a very ancient opinion. They tried to fortify it with moral reasons ; they pretended that leisure was indispensable to man to make perfect his nature and to practise virtue ; but the germ of their doctrines according to their arguments goes back to the aristocratic epoch.

We shall see in the next chapters that Greek ideology is in accord with the economy of this unique people in history. And Aristotle, finding that “ nature ” has made slaves of peoples conquered by the Greeks, was quite in the nature of the time.

### SOURCES OF WEALTH AND LABOUR

The large proprietors in Greece were rare, and their domains did not exceed the dimensions of what we call to-day medium-sized estates. They could not evidently dig or work the soil, even if they had the taste for work ; they merely gave orders and directed the execution of them. Many resembled the Strepiades in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes “ who lived happily in the country, without trouble and anxiety, rich in bees, in goats, in olives,” and who lay down to sleep at night with a strong odour of the “ dregs of wine, of cheese and of wool ” ; or, again, this Ischomachos that Xenophon in his *Economics* shows us in the midst of his personnel, offering to all a model

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

accomplished by ability and activity. All these people had to serve the Athenians, free workmen and slaves. The free worker was hired out, sometimes by the day, sometimes for several weeks or for several months ; but he seems to have been little employed. Manual labour performed by slaves was abundant in Attica, and habitually it was not expensive ; about eight pounds sterling represented the normal price of a rural slave.

In industry is found the same dualism as in agriculture. There were in Athens a number of petty artisans working in nearly all the trades. Socrates was astonished one day that a young man dared not address the people, and he said to him that a group of shoemakers, of fullers, of masons, blacksmiths, merchants, brokers were not an audience so difficult.

On the side of the citizens, a considerable place was reserved for strangers, and one notices that the State never favoured the former to the detriment of the latter ; when work was begun, the two were equally admitted. The only idea in such a case was to parcel out as far as possible the contracts and to bring them within reach of even the jobbers. This tendency shows itself even in the exploitation of the mines. The aspects of the drifts and the places for washing, still visible in the reign of Laurion, prove that the concessions were extremely divided. It is cited that an individual paid for his the derisive sum of six pounds sterling, and it is not certain that this was an exceptional figure.

To judge from the documents, the artisan worked nearly always for the State or for the public ; it was rare that he was hired by a patron. Except in a few industries, such as that of building, he lived in his shop,



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

and there he was at the same time producer and seller. He found aids in his family : first his son, who very often served his apprenticeship with him : then his wife, who shared willingly the work ; for example, that of Artemis, who gilded the arms made by her husband. Besides, nothing prevented a wife from having her own clientèle, without mentioning those who were placed as nurses. There were at Athens women bakers, dyers, workers in wool, merchants of ribbons, wreaths, balls of yarns, retail dealers.

Certain ones were master artisans, and limited their operations to the direction of their enterprises. Their workshops were never very large in Athens. The largest that one knows is a manufactory of shields that Pephalos possessed at Piræus and which held 120 workers. The father of Demosthenes had a factory of swords with thirty-two slaves and a manufactory of furniture with twenty. The workshop of Apollodorus must have had more importance, since it gave a larger revenue. Some minor concessions were somewhat extensive, notably that of Nicias with his 1,000 slaves ; that of Epicrates, who obtained an annual benefice of over 20,000 pounds sterling ; those of Dophilos and of several others. But, on the whole, one can affirm that the wholesale industry, in the actual sense of the word, was not known by the Greeks.

Their groups of workers were not comparable to ours. They had workshops, they did not have factories ; in the first place, because in the place of our powerful machines they were contented with very simple tools, without even having the idea of demanding the motive force of nature ; and, secondly, because the individual fortunes were ordinarily mediocre enough, and because associations of capital were hardly even formed. And one knows the supposition of

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

Aristotle considering machine-work, that it rendered useless the work of slaves as a fantasy.

The important men in industrial affairs did not prohibit the employment of "free workers"; but it seems that they preferred, in general, slaves, at least they are always slaves that we see in the workshops mentioned by the authors. The master-artisan was not necessarily the owner of the persons employed by him; often he was only the tenant; when he did not wish to use his money for the purchase of men, he borrowed, in consideration of a sum of money, the workmen that he needed. The work of slaves was perhaps not less costly than the work of free men, but the master had a greater authority over the slave than over another worker. He could deprive him of nourishment, chain him, strike him; he could also stimulate him by a gift or some favour, especially by the anticipation of being freed. Because of this, no doubt, his preference for workers over whom he had such great authority. An individual, anxious concerning his interests, passed his time in his workshop, and it was considered already that nothing equalled the "eye of the master." The monuments represented agree with the texts to certify to this. In a vase-painting, a master-artisan, recognisable by his clothing and attitude, follows closely, in a potter's atelier, the operation of the firing. Elsewhere, a man seated at a forge seems to give an order authoritatively. In a shoemaker's shop, an individual makes a gesture as if he were addressing an employee who is about to serve a client.

If there were proprietors and manufacturers, active and laborious, there were, on the other hand, those who neglected totally their work. Demosthenes points out one who detested the country and who liked better

to do nothing in the city. Strepsiad, after his marriage with a noble woman, is obliged to leave his fields and to establish himself in Athens, where his son, the sugar-refiner of antiquity, lazy and spendthrift, is in the process of ruining him. Another, dissatisfied with what the earth rendered, renounced agriculture to seek some work more lucrative. A large number yielded to the attraction of politics, and it is known how absorbing it was in antiquity. "I imagine, for example," says M. Guiraud,<sup>1</sup> "that Pericles and Alcibiades had hardly the leisure to think of their estates."

Among the personages who played a rôle in the history of Athens at the end of the fifth century, several were leaders in industry; one has only to recall the names of Cleon, the tanner, of Hyperbolos, the maker of lamps, of Cleophon, the maker of lyres, of Anytos, the leather-maker; while these were engaged in their work (for the State), all these men had to leave their professions. I could mention as many who were engaged in liberal careers: Isocrates, whose father was a lute-maker and who taught rhetoric; Lysias, Demosthenes, Apollodorus, who became lawyers although they inherited an *atelier* for making armour. In short, it could happen that a man turned towards philosophy, literature, poetry, not with the idea of speculation, but by dilettantism or through taste, as Sophocles, who wrote tragedies rather than work the forge of his father.

Philosophy seemed to be the domain the farthest removed from the economic common life. But the greatest historians of Greek philosophy—Edward Zeller chiefly—note at each instant a perfect agreement between philosophy and the life economic and social of the Greeks.

<sup>1</sup> Guiraud, *loc. cit.*



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

The birth itself of philosophy in the Ionian Isles, centre of Greek commerce—does it not prove the close relation between the economic base and the philosophic superstructure? Thus, to cite an example, the aversion of Plato for personal fortune translated itself into a hostility quite similar towards immigrants. In the Republic of his dream he tolerated the presence of these, because it is necessary, evidently, that someone exercise the professions prohibited to citizens; but he requires that they leave at the end of twenty years with all they possess, and if before this extension of time they exceed a certain sum of riches, they should leave within thirty days. This measure has for its essential object the prevention of the accumulation of capital. The thing is so true that when a stranger does not stay, but comes simply as a tourist, Plato recommends that he be warmly welcomed. But although the philosophers, and especially Plato, mercilessly criticised the idle rich, they had a deeply-rooted contempt for labour, particularly manual work, and the working-man was generally considered as an inferior being. In fact, little distinction was made, socially and morally, between him and the slave.

Solon had tried to react against this prejudice—that is, contempt of labour—so general, so rooted in Greece. He drew up laws against idleness and vagrancy. He granted to the cleverest workmen of each profession the privilege of a free meal at the *prytanæum* and a place of honour at public assemblies. He did not wish the son to be forced to keep the father, should the latter not have had him taught some trade. Plutarch attempts to justify these daring reforms of the legislator of Athens by alleging as an extreme circumstance the sterility of the Attic land.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *Solon*.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

But Solon did not succeed in changing public opinion, and industrial professions remained the lot of the servile or semi-servile classes, of the *thetes*, of the *metèques*, particularly of the slaves. The position of the *thetes*, except for political rights, was pretty well that of slavery. They were unskilled labourers, hiring themselves out by the day to do the humblest and hardest work. They ground the mills and worked in factories side by side with slaves. In Athens there was even a place where *pêle-mêle* with the slaves and for a very modest wage (3 oboles, about 4 pence per day) they could be hired publicly.<sup>1</sup>

The Athenian proletariat endeavoured to find a remedy against their state of neglect. In fact, according to one of Solon's laws, all workmen, commercial or industrial, had the right to organise societies, on the only condition that they did not violate the law common to all citizens.<sup>2</sup> Athens had therefore its workers' unions, analogous to those of the Middle Ages, and, as in Europe, people exercising the same trade lived as far as possible in the same part of the town. Thus in Athens there was a farmers' quarters, a sculptors' quarter, a quarter for workers in bronze, etc. And this because the same general conditions produce almost everywhere the same effects.

To sum up, the free proletariat of Athens consisted of almost all trades and types of commerce.<sup>3</sup> Domesticity ended by competing with slavery, and free Athenian women went out as servants in rich families.

This state of things was the necessary consequence of the dispossession of the inferior classes, to whom

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Moreau-Christophe, *Droit à l'oisiveté*, p. 222. See also Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières*, vol. i.

<sup>2</sup> Moreau-Christophe, loc. cit., p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> Aristophanes, *Clouds*.



SOLON  
(638-558 B.C.)





## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

there was frequently left nothing but the title of citizen, political liberty, and this explains why, in Athens, to be a demagogue was often a real profession.

The Athenians understood perfectly well that the formation of a working-class must result from a combined action exercised by indigence and personal liberty, that is, by isolation and neglect. "Were Pluto to recover his sight," said Aristophanes in one of his dialogues,<sup>1</sup> "and to give himself equally to all, no one would want to follow any trade nor learn any art. Once the two conditions of life were destroyed, who could want to forge iron, build ships, make clothing, construct wheels, cut leather, make bricks, cultivate the ground so as to reap the gifts of Ceres, if each person can live in idleness and neglect all these labours? The work of which you speak would be done by our slaves. Where will you get them? Ah, but we will buy them? And who will want to sell if all have money? We shall find some rapacious merchant from Thessaly, the country full of slave-traders. But according to your system there will be no more slave-traders, for what rich man would waste his capital on such a trade?"

The position of the free Athenian proletariat resembled very much our modern proletariat. It gave rise to the formation of a class of needy, infirm, sick, neglected old people, as well as to "unemployed," which the city were bound to help and to feed. The Athenian proletariat had probably to struggle against greater difficulties than the modern proletariat, for slavery naturally limited the field of free work. This situation certainly incited Athens to throw itself into industrialism and speculation; she therefore, simultaneously and without distinction, exploited both the

<sup>1</sup> *Plutus*.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
slave and the free workman, the former principally,  
with the result that the city took on a special  
physiognomy.<sup>1</sup>

### COMMERCE AND CAPITAL IN GREECE

The Greeks (and the Romans) possessed to the highest degree the taste for affairs and the spirit of speculation. At an early time arose, on the borders of the Ægean Sea, places of commerce, such as Corinth, Egimus, Milet, Chalcis, where operations extended far, and finally Athens eclipsed them all in the fifth century before Jesus Christ. These cities were not satisfied with having relations with each other and with the neighbouring countries; their traffic had already a world-wide character and penetrated in all explored countries, even in lands entirely barbarous. Without doubt, their field of action seems to us restricted, if we compare it with ours; but it was a daring enterprise for an Asiatic city of the seventh and ninth centuries to send its products to the lower end of the Black Sea, to Egypt, Etruria, and Spain. That supposed a force of expansion as great as that which pushes our merchants into Japan and Australia. The commercial horizon of the Greek expanded till after the conquests of Alexander, and later; the creation of the Roman Empire had for effect to determine a regular current which brought to the heart of the Mediterranean certain objects from India, China, Central Africa, and the shores of the Baltic. Rome played then a rôle similar to that of London or of Hamburg, with the difference that she did not cease importing without exporting something else besides money.

The Athenians knew wonderfully how to turn to account their capital. They distinguished between

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letourneau, *L'Évolution de l'Esclavage*, p. 367.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

“idle” money and money which “works,” and they wished their drachmas to work as much as possible. Whoever had savings did all in his power to discover a borrower ; also one notices that the greater part of the inheritances comprised several loans. It was, in reality, an allurement very enticing, the hope of touching an interest of 12, 18, and even, when one ran a great risk, of 30 per cent. Almost all the towns had banks, which devoted themselves to very various operations ; the change of titles and drawing-up of contracts, payments, either in sums already deposited, or with advances of funds, current accounts, change of place, credit. There were even Banks of the State, invested by the law in a veritable monopoly.

To sum up. The Greek cities, Athens in particular, were prosperous. They enjoyed political liberty, but the entire Greek civilisation was based upon the exploitation of the masses by the classes, of the slaves and the working-men by the masters, the rich landowners and capitalists.

Helots and Perioki did the work, prepared the communal soup, but got no spoon. A question of great difficulty which a socialistic State of the future will have to solve is that of the hard and disagreeable tasks—in a State of perfect equality. But this side of the labour question and of the proletariat did not exist in antiquity at all, as the dirty work, and almost all work, was done by slaves. Communism was limited, in Sparta, as in the Ideal State of Plato, to the upper classes, not to the rabble and the *canaille*. Social revolutionaries, therefore, arose in Sparta in the third century and, basing themselves upon oracles, clamoured for economical equality. In Sparta social democracy and social justice never existed. Nor was there any real equality, either political or economic. Fustel des

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Coulanges doubts even the fact that land had been equally divided by lot by Lycurgus.<sup>1</sup> But even if that were true, the distribution was limited to a certain number of persons. Furthermore, slavery was an institution continued by Lycurgus, and labour was held in contempt.

But even in Athens, where perfect political liberty had at last been obtained by the demos, there never existed any real social democracy. The differences between the classes of society were too great. There are many among us who feel outraged at the Marxian idea of the materialistic conception of history, the idea that civilisation is produced under the stress of economic factors. They point out that man does not live by bread alone; that even if some socialistic Labour or Bolshevik Government were in a position to perform the miracle of providing every man, woman, and child with food, shelter, and clothing, even if it were able to satisfy the requirements of the body, the cravings of heart and soul would still remain paramount.<sup>2</sup> I grant this and am not in favour of the materialistic conception of history, but the craving of the soul and the longing of the heart are directly the result of economic factors, and it is the economic glaring inequality which, in spite of the much-praised political democracy, made Greek society as well as our own far removed from a social democracy in the true sense of the word. A social democracy as has been dreamed of by humanity's best sons was unknown to the Greek genius.

Such a democracy has been foreshadowed by the prophets of Israel and the Stoics. They had dreamt of the brotherhood of man, of a league of men instead

<sup>1</sup> Fustel des Coulanges, *La Cité Antique*, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> L. Stein, *Die Soziale Frage*, p. 12.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

of a league of nations, of a moral and holy alliance of human beings, instead of unholy alliances of rulers and potentates.

Greece, it must be admitted, knew no system of castes, but she had drawn a line of demarcation between political and social democracy. "The contrast between State and Society, between political liberty and equality, on the one side, and the unfreedom and inequality dominating the social organism, could not have been more sharply underlined as it has been done by Aristotle in his politics."<sup>1</sup> And Aristotle mirrored the mind of Greece. If equality and fraternity are to exist in the State, their realisation is quite impossible where such sharp contrasts exist between rich and poor, for the economic dependence makes the labourer a slave. At the polling-booth the labourer may feel a free man, living in a democracy, in society, governed by economic factors; he is still a slave, and in the crowded Albert Halls of ancient Athens, in the Agora, the proletarian's heart swelled with pride when he listened to politicians and labour leaders babbling of democracy and freedom. In reality, however, he was an economic slave.

Rightly, wrote Roscher,<sup>2</sup> that "equality before the law and even equality of opportunity is only a scrap of paper, as long as this equality is handicapped by economic stress."

There was political freedom in Athens where the meanest could aspire to State functions, to a seat in Parliament or in the Agora, but there was no social democracy. Rich profiteers and monopolists, possessors of town houses and country residences, owners of vast estates, rich capitalists commanding the labour

<sup>1</sup> Poehlmann, *Geschichte des Kommunismus im Altertum*, ii, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> *Grundlagen*, vol. i, p. 523.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
of proletarians and slaves, on the one side, and miserable, despised working-men, small artisans, and retail merchants on the other. It is on the rock of this contradiction between political democracy and social and economic glaring inequality that Greece was shattered.

It has been maintained<sup>1</sup> that as the mass of the people in Athens, the proletarians, had *de jure* and *de facto* the power in hand, they could not have been economically an oppressed class. On the contrary, the rich of Athens, in the Pericleian period, were very hard up.

This is to a certain extent true, but the real reason why the rich were afraid of losing their wealth was because, the labouring classes having become economically dependent, in spite of all political democracy, clever agitators and demagogues availed themselves of the opportunity to preach a gospel of labour, not so much in the interest of labour, of the suffering masses, but in their own interests. They preached a gospel of labour and of social democracy, but they introduced a reign of terror. That is why Aristophanes so mercilessly criticises and makes fun of Athenian democracy in his *Ecclesiazuse*.

Adler<sup>2</sup> also asserts that the antagonism of class was due to the fact, not of the masses being poorer, but more powerful. I think, however, that it was really due to the fact of their having become conscious of the contradiction between their political democracy and their economic dependence. Their leaders and agitators, their representatives, the demagogues, the secretaries of unions and labour organisations, availed

<sup>1</sup> G. Adler, *Geschichte des Sozialismus und Kommunismus*, pp. 20-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

themselves of this state of affairs, and prepared class-struggle, the hatred and *furor delendi* of the masses, and the downfall of Greece.

I agree, however, with Poehlmann, that it was the absence of social democracy, of social equality, or, let us say, of social justice, which fostered bitterness in the hearts of the proletariat.<sup>1</sup> Great contrasts provoked envy and jealousy. "Devant la richesse," writes Fustel des Coulanges, "le sentiment le plus ordinaire n'est pas le respect, c'est l'envie,"<sup>2</sup> So was it also in Athens.

Thus a social unrest existed in Attica since the sixth century B.C. It had been partially solved by Solon, but it soon again became acute. In Greece, as in other countries of antiquity, in China, India, and Persia, man's dissatisfaction with the present made him dream of an ideal State where justice and equity reigned supreme. Whilst, however, the modern social philosophers, preachers and prophets see this State in the future which they consider their duty to realise, the ancients dreamed of this much-desired state of social justice in the dim and distant past.<sup>3</sup> This legend of a lost Paradise we meet in the works of Theopomp, of Hekataeus of Abdera, and of Dikaarch of Menana, whom Poehlmann<sup>4</sup> rightly considers as the precursor of Rousseau. It is a legend, as Stein points out, to which poets and social reformers of all ages have persistently clung. We find it in the poems of Ovid and Virgil, of Tibullus and Seneca, in Dante's *Divina Commedia*, in Tasso's *Aminta*, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in Klopstock's *Messiade*, in Goethe's *Tasso*, in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Everywhere there is a regret for the lost

<sup>1</sup> Aristophanes, *Birds*.

<sup>2</sup> *La Cité antique*, p. 385.

<sup>3</sup> See Cognetti de Martiis, *Il Socialismo antico*.

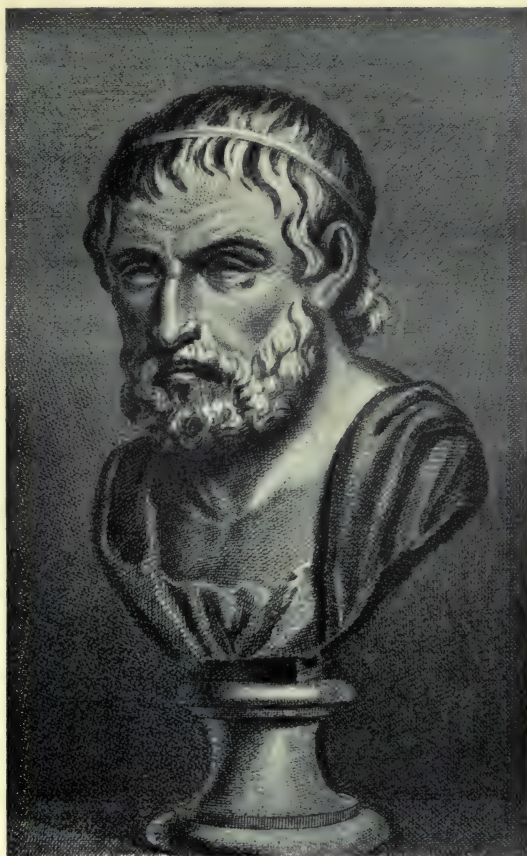
<sup>4</sup> Poehlmann, loc. cit., p. 113.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

golden age of the dim and distant past, that eternal peace which was possible only in the Paradise lost to man. Our modern statesmen, more sober and scientific, our socialists and communists, unlike Lot's wife, look forward and not backwards. They see the Paradise of Social Justice, not in the past, but in a not dim and distant future. The one sees it in the Eden of a communist or Bolshevik State, the other in an age when the law will be issued by the League of Nations, and "the word of the Lord will come forth from Geneva." In antiquity, however, this Paradise was thrown back into the past. Anyhow, this yearning for the fleshpots of a lost Egypt is proof enough that a social unrest always existed in Greece.

The old patriarchal system had disappeared, and under the stress of economic circumstances the working-people, the poor and the lowly, were downtrodden and oppressed. The feeling, however, that the disinherited were victims of a social injustice gradually got hold of the minds of the Greek proletariat. This feeling led to reflection and criticism. But the feelings of the masses are always expressed by individuals. The first to sound the note of criticism, to attack the existing rule of the aristocratic class, and to sing a pæan to labour—in other words, to preach a gospel both of labour and of a social democracy—was Hesiod. No doubt Hesiod is still too firmly rooted and too much attached to convention and to tradition even to hint at a sort of social revolution. He does not attack social institutions, but, like all the Utopists of later ages, his arguments are ethico-religious. The moral and religious ideas of men alone have the power to change economic misfortune and suffering into economic happiness. It is interesting to compare the Song of Labour uttered by Hesiod with the works produced at a time when the spirit





HESIOD

*(Flourished during eighth century B.C.)*



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

of ethical idealism had come down upon the captives of economic materialism.<sup>1</sup>

Like so many Utopists of a later age, Hesiod does not attack the existing order of things. He preaches a gospel of labour and of democracy, but his hopes of its realisation are centred in the moral change of the rich and of the powerful. In this respect Hesiod reminds us of the prophets of Israel and of the Christian Socialists in modern times. A pessimist, Hesiod is too much impressed by reality and his own experiences to hope for a moral change. He is so full of despair that he wishes he had been born either before his own time or later. Either too early or too late he had come, a complaint which has been repeated by many a pessimist in the course of centuries.

But his words, his songs addressed to the lowly of ancient Greece, to the poor and to the downtrodden, to the homeless and to the enslaved, in a word, to the proletarians of ancient Hellas, was a song of consolation. It is always a solace to the human heart to hear our wrongs, our sufferings and feelings of bitterness to which we are unable to give vent in adequate words, expressed in song. Hesiod was the poet of the poor, of the gueux, of the farmer, and of the labourer. His verses are the poetical gulls; harbingers of the approaching storm-cloud over the ruling classes.<sup>2</sup> The proletarians began to feel that it was not the individual who was suffering, but the entire class of labourers, farmers, and artisans, and that the prime moving factor was not individual misfortune, but social injustice, the result of a dictatorship of the rich and the wealthy. Class-consciousness awoke, and class-struggle was gradually rising, like a storm-cloud on the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. Sombart, *Sozialismus im ten Jahrhundert*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Poehlmann, loc. cit., vol. ii., p. 131.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

horizon. Nearer and nearer were drawing the two armies of rich and poor, mustering their forces and preparing for the battle which was to be waged all through history. The feeling of social injustice, of bitterness, of a longing for economic amelioration and for social democracy, awoke in Greece. Labour was preparing to throw its gauntlet in the face of Capitalism.

Demands for political democracy were now accompanied by urgent requests for economic and social democracy. Political democracy triumphed in the end in Hellas, but not social democracy. Proletarian revolts were frequent. But labour still remained in the service of capital. For as long as capital relies on slavery, free labour is not in a position to fight capital on an equal footing.

It happened in Athens what has happened, and what is still continuing to happen, in modern times, namely, a sharp contrast between the political and economic constitution of the city-state. Whilst Athens was politically a democracy, it was socially and economically a bourgeois or capitalist State, based on exploitation and oppression. Politically, the ideas of freedom and equality, the postulates of democracy had triumphed, but economically and socially such was not the case, and the contrast between rich and poor, between capitalist and working-classes was one of the sharpest, for a political democracy is not identical with a social democracy. All citizens of Athens were equal before the law, all could have a part in the government of the city-state. Nay, more—there was even a social equality of opportunity, a request which has not yet been granted to the citizen of many so-called democratic countries in the twentieth century.

In the famous funeral oration of Pericles, this is the

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

ideal outlined for the Athenian citizens. In reality, however, this political democracy, the equality of opportunity, was of little avail to the lowly and the poor, the lower classes, the farmers, and the labourers. It was freedom only theoretically. Athens was a free country only in a name, a democracy only in theory. Economically, it was not a democracy, and equality of opportunity has only a meaning and a value when the citizen is not handicapped by economic stress and not prevented from competing with his fellow-citizens. In order to avail oneself of this political equality, a certain leisure is required. In fact, in Athens only those were really citizens who could and did have part in public affairs. The people, however, who were economically dependent—in other words, who had to work for their livings—had neither time nor opportunity to avail themselves of this prerogative. Equality of opportunity, in ancient Hellas, *tout comme chez nous*, was an empty phrase, which can only satisfy those who have time and leisure to utter it on platforms or write about it in the Press. In Athens only worldly possessions, material and economical welfare, made a man really free and enabled him to exercise his prerogatives of a free citizen, to enjoy the blessings of political democracy and of equality of opportunity. A man who has to work for his living, who has to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, who is a proletarian, either manual or intellectual, and is economically dependent upon his fellow-man, who can either take away his sustenance or underpay him, may be theoretically free, but in reality he is a slave. It is sad, but it is a fact nevertheless, that only economic independence gives a citizen the real feeling of freedom.

How many are there in our very free modern so-called "democratic" countries whom economic

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

dependence compels to hide their feelings, ideas, and opinions out of respect, consideration, or fear of those upon whom they are economically dependent? Can this be called equality or real freedom? How many are there who are even induced to vote for a political party with which they are not at all in sympathy, simply because they dare not offend those to whom they have sold their labour. Only when the labourers are organised can they to a certain extent exercise some influence and make use of their political freedom. The individual working-man was and still is a slave, even under the best of political democracies. The people who delegate their sovereignty to representatives are no longer sovereign. How much more is this the case with a man who sells his time and his labour to someone else. He is no longer his equal, but his dependent, and logically Plato was right when he postulated an exclusion from government of all those who are compelled to work for their living. The *political* freedom which democracy grants is an empty word, a useless gift. In Athens the working-man was nothing but "a thing," an instrument in the hands of the employer or labour-giver.

Thus the voice of social reform, of labour and democracy resounded in Attica, in spite of its political democracy. Demos was dissatisfied. The architect Hippodamos of Milet, a contemporary of Socrates, conceived the idea of a new organisation of the State, wherein, however, the inhabitants were divided into three classes—warriors, peasants, and artisans.

Phaleas of Chalcedon, again, conceived the idea of an almost socialistic state, based on collective ideals. According to Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> Phaleas is supposed to have postulated perfect equality of possession of all citizens.

<sup>1</sup> *Politics*, ii. 12, 1274b.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

Even some of the much-abused sophists often insisted upon equal rights for all, and Lykophron demanded the abolition of the aristocracy of birth,<sup>1</sup> an innovation which even Labour Cabinets do not dare to propose, for they, on the contrary, strengthen and increase the numbers of the aristocracy. Alcidamas was more modest; he only demanded the abolition of slavery, men, in his opinion, being born free.<sup>2</sup> The Sophists, therefore, were not so black as they have often been painted. Some of them were quite respectable Radicals, and in modern times would have been called Socialists, and even Communists, for did not Critias, *à la* the Red Lords of the Kremlin, make fun of gods and religion? They were Radicals and social reformers, because in ancient Hellas, where labour was not sacrosanct, where the masses and proletarians were not pandered to but were despised; where work was the lot of the slave; where idleness was the ideal of the free man, and labour was loathed, they dared to suggest the abolition of slavery. This implied work for all those who had formerly thrown the entire burden upon the shoulders of the slaves. Had some of the Sophists lived in the twentieth century, they would certainly have been in favour of the Labour Party, and who knows—one is sometimes inclined to believe in the transmigration of souls—but that the souls of a Lykophron, of a Kallicles, and of a Kritias may have chosen their abodes, during their last peregrinations, in the body of a leader of a Labour Party.

Such, anyhow, was the Radical tendency of the Sophists. The gospel of social justice is hinted at, very frequently, in the literature and the poetry of the

<sup>1</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Nobilitate*, 18, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, i. 3, 1253.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

day.<sup>1</sup> Thus Euripides makes one of his characters, a slave, say, "We are also men, and many a free man could not boast of the virtues of the slaves."<sup>2</sup>

The Attic stage became the mirror of the ideas and cravings for social justice. It reflected current thoughts and ideas and preached at the same time a social reform. Before the tribunal of reason Euripides cited the traditional and conventional ideas on God's humanity, criticising them mercilessly. Gradually a spirit of social revolt—of the emancipation of the fourth estate—a negation of the prerogatives of the aristocracy, a demand for the abolition of slavery found currency and were formulated and postulated by poets and philosophers.

Socrates, too, may be said to have preached a gospel of labour and of social democracy, although he has been hitherto considered only as a moral reformer. One of the ideas which Socrates bequeathed to Greek philosophers, a legacy which passed from him to Plato, from Plato to the Stoics and Cicero, and from the latter to St. Augustine, is the principle of non-written laws upon which Socrates based his theory of justice. This theory of justice is still very vague, very narrow, but it contained the seed which was destined to blossom forth and bear fruit in the philosophies of the Stoics. Where, however, Socrates may be considered as a real social reformer is in his ideas on family and *labour*. Socrates looks upon women as the equal of man, and he draws a glowing picture of woman as housewife and mother, a picture which would gladden the heart of any modern defender of feminine rights. But he is above all the philosopher of labour, and like the author of the Psalms and the Rabbis of the Talmud, he speaks

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*.

<sup>2</sup> Stein, loc. cit.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

in glowing terms of the dignity of labour—not political and intellectual work, but physical work. Xenophon, in his *Memorabilia* and in the *Banquet*, acquaints us with Socrates' ideas on labour, as will be seen from the following passages :

But indolence, moreover, and pleasures which offer themselves without being sought, are neither capable of producing a good constitution of body, as the teachers of gymnastic exercises say, nor do they bring to the mind any knowledge worthy of consideration ; but exercises pursued with persevering labour lead men to the attainment of honourable and valuable objects, as worthy men inform us ; and Hesiod somewhere says :

“ Vice it is possible to find in abundance and with ease ; for the way to it is smooth, and lies very near. But before the temple of Virtue the immortal gods have placed *labour*, and the way to it is long and steep, and at the commencement rough, but when the traveller has arrived at the summit, it then becomes easy, however difficult it was at first.”

A sentiment to which Epicharmus gives his testimony in this verse—

The gods for *labour* sell us all good things ;

and in another place he says—

O wretched mortal, desire not what is soft,  
lest you find what is hard.

Prodicus the sophist, also, in his narrative concerning Hercules, which, indeed, he declaims to most people as a specimen of his ability, expresses a similar notion respecting virtue, speaking, as far as I remember,



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

to the following effect. For he says that Hercules, when he was advancing from boyhood to manhood, a period at which the young, becoming their own masters, begin to give intimations whether they will enter on life by the path of virtue or that of vice, went forth into a solitary place, and sat down, perplexed as to which of these two paths he should pursue ; (22) and that two female figures, of lofty stature, seemed to advance towards him, the one of an engaging and graceful mien, gifted by nature with elegance of form, modesty of look, and sobriety of demeanour, and clad in a white robe ; the other fed to plumpness and softness, but made up both in her complexion, so as to seem fairer and rosier than she really was, and in her gesture, so as to seem more upright than she naturally was ; she had her eyes wide open, and a robe through which her beauty would readily show itself ; she frequently contemplated her figure, and looked about to see if anyone else was observing her ; and she frequently glanced back at her own shadow. (23) As they approached nearer to Hercules, she whom I first described came forward at the same pace, but the other, eager to get before her, ran up to Hercules and exclaimed : “ I see that you are hesitating, Hercules, by what path you shall enter upon life ; if, then, you make a friend of me, I will conduct you by the most delightful and easy road, and you shall taste of every species of pleasure, and pass through life without experiencing difficulties. (24) In the first place, you shall take no thought of wars or State affairs, but shall pass your time considering what meat or drink you may find to gratify your appetite, what you may delight yourself by seeing or hearing, what you may be pleased with smelling or touching, with what objects of affection you may have most pleasure

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

in associating, how you may sleep most softly, and how you may secure all these enjoyments with the least degree of trouble. (25) If an apprehension of want of means, by which such delights may be obtained, should ever arise in you, there is no fear that I shall urge you to procure them by toil or suffering either of body or mind ; but you shall enjoy what others acquire by labour, abstaining from nothing by which it may be possible to profit, for I give my followers liberty to benefit themselves from any source whatever."

(26) Hercules, on hearing this address, said, " And what, O woman, is your name ? " " My friends," she replied, " call me Happiness, but those who hate me give me, to my disparagement, the name of Vice."

(27) In the meantime the other female approached, and said, " I also am come to address you, Hercules, because I know your parents, and have observed your disposition in the training of your childhood, from which I entertain hopes that if you direct your steps along the path that leads to my dwelling, you will become an excellent performer of whatever is honourable and noble, and that I shall appear more honourable and distinguished in goodness. I will not deceive you, however, with promises of pleasure, but will set before you things as they really are, and as the gods have appointed them ; (28) for of what is valuable and excellent, the gods grant nothing to mankind without labour and care ; and if you wish the gods, therefore, to be propitious to you, you must worship the gods ; if you seek to be beloved by your friends, you must serve your friends ; if you desire to be honoured by any city, you must benefit that city ; if you claim to be admired by all Greece for your merit, you must endeavour to be of advantage to all Greece ; if you are anxious that the earth should yield you abundance



of fruit, you must cultivate the earth ; if you think that you should enrich yourself from herds of cattle, you must bestow care upon herds of cattle ; if you are eager to increase your means of war, and to secure freedom to your friends and subdue your enemies, you must learn the arts of the war, and learn them from such as understand them, and practise how to use them in the right way ; or if you wish to be vigorous in body, you must accustom your body to obey your mind, and exercise it with toil and exertion."

(29) Here Vice, interrupting her speech, said (as Prodicus relates) : " Do you see, Hercules, how difficult and tedious a road to gratification this woman describes to you, while I shall lead you, by an easy and short path, to perfect happiness ? "

(30) " Wretched being," rejoined Virtue, " of what good are you in possession ? Or what real pleasure do you experience, when you are unwilling to do anything for the attainment of it ? You, who do not even wait for the natural desire of gratification, but fill yourself with all manner of dainties before you have an appetite for them ; eating before you are hungry, drinking before you are thirsty, procuring cooks that you may eat with pleasure, buying costly wines that you may drink with pleasure, and running about seeking for snow in summer ; while, in order to sleep with pleasure, you prepare not only soft beds, but couches, with rockers under your couches, for you do not desire sleep in consequence of labour, but in consequence of having nothing to do ; you force the sensual inclinations before they require gratification, using every species of contrivance for the purpose, and abusing male and female, for thus it is that you treat your friends, insulting their modesty at night, and making them sleep away the most useful part of their day.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

(31) Though you are one of the immortals, you are cast out from the society of the gods, and despised by the good among mankind ; the sweetest of all sounds, the praises of yourself, you have never heard, nor have you ever seen the most pleasing of all sights, for you have never beheld one meritorious work of your own hand. Who would believe you when you give your word for anything ? Or who would assist you when in need of anything ? Or who, that has proper feeling, would venture to join your company of revellers ? for while they are young they grow impotent in mind ; they live without labour, and in fatness, through their youth, and pass laboriously, and in wretchedness, through old age ; ashamed of what they have done, oppressed with what they have to do, having run through their pleasures in early years, and laid up afflictions for the close of life. (32) But I am the companion of the gods ; I associate with virtuous men ; no honourable deed, divine or human, is done without me ; I am honoured, most of all, by the deities and by those among men to whom it belongs to honour me, being a welcome co-operator with artisans, a faithful household guardian to masters, a benevolent assistant to servants, a benign promoter of the labours of peace, a constant auxiliary to the efforts of war, an excellent sharer in friendship. (33) My friends have a sweet and untroubled enjoyment of meat and drink, for they refrain from them till they feel an appetite. They have also sweeter sleep than the idle ; and are neither annoyed if they lose a portion of it, nor neglect to do their duties for the sake of it. The young are pleased with praises from the old ; the old are delighted with honours from the young. They remember their former acts with pleasure, and rejoice to perform their present occupations with success ;

being my influence, dear to the gods, beloved by their friends, and honoured by their country. And when the destined end of life comes, they do not lie in oblivion and dishonour, but, celebrated with songs of praise, flourish for ever in the memory of mankind. By such a course of conduct, O Hercules, son of noble parents, you may secure the most exalted happiness."

(34) Nearly thus it was that Prodicus related the instruction of Hercules by Virtue ; adorning the sentiments, however, with far more magnificent language than that in which I now give them. It becomes you, therefore, Aristippus, reflecting on these admonitions, to endeavour to think of what concerns the future period of your life."

"Artisans, then," asked Socrates, "are persons that know how to make something useful?" "Unquestionably," replied Aristarchus. "Is barley-meal, then, useful?" "Very." "Is bread?" "Not less so." "And are men's and women's garments, coats, cloaks and mantles, useful?" "They are all extremely useful." "And do those who are residing with you, then, not know how to make any of these things?" "They know how to make them all, as I believe." (6) "And are you not aware that from the manufacture of one of these articles, that of barleymeal, Nausicydes supports not only himself and his household, but a great number of swine and oxen besides, and gains, indeed, so much more than he wants, that he often even assists the Government with his money? Are you not aware that Cyrebus, by making bread, maintains his whole household, and lives luxuriously ; that Demea, of Collytus, supports himself by making cloaks, Menon by making woollen

\* Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, ch. i. (Engl. transl. by J. S. Watson).

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

cloaks, and that most of the Megarians live by making mantles ? ” “ Certainly they do,” said Aristarchus ; “ for they purchase barbarian slaves and keep them, in order to force them to do what they please ; but I have with me freeborn persons and relatives.” (7) “ Then,” added Socrates, “ because they are free and related to you, do you think that they ought to do nothing else but eat and sleep ? Among other free persons, do you see that those who live thus spend their time more pleasantly, and do you consider them happier, than those who practise the arts which they know, and which are useful to support life ? Do you find that idleness and carelessness are serviceable to mankind, either for learning what it becomes them to know, or for remembering what they have learned, or for maintaining the health and strength of their bodies, or for acquiring and preserving what is useful for the support of life, and that industry and diligence are of no service at all ? (8) And as to the arts which you say they know, whether did they learn them as being useless to maintain life, and with the intention of never practising any of them, or, on the contrary, with a view to occupy themselves about them, and to reap profit from them ? In which condition will men be more temperate, living in idleness, or attending useful employments ? In which condition will they be more honest, if they work, or if they sit in idleness meditating how to procure necessities ? (9) Under present circumstances, as I should suppose, you neither feel attached to your relatives, nor they to you, for you find them burdensome to you, and they see that you are annoyed with their company. From such feelings there is danger that dislike may grow stronger and stronger, and that previous friendly inclinations may be diminished. But if you take them under your



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

direction, so that they may be employed, you will love them, when you see that they are serviceable to you, and they will grow attached to you, when they find that you feel satisfaction in their society ; and remembering past services with greater pleasure, you will increase the friendly feeling resulting from them, and consequently grow more attached and better disposed towards each other.

(10) If indeed, they were going to employ themselves in anything dishonourable, death would be preferable to it ; but the accomplishments which they know are, as it appears, such as are most honourable and becoming to women ; and all people execute what they know with the greatest ease and expedition, and with the utmost credit and pleasure. Do not hesitate, therefore," concluded Socrates, " to recommend to them this line of conduct, which will benefit both you and them ; and they, as it is probable, will cheerfully comply with your wishes."

At last he came to Socrates, and told him with delight of the states of things in his house ; adding that " the women complained of him as being the only person in the house that ate the bread of idleness."

(13) " And do you not tell them," said Socrates, " the fable of the dog ? For they say that when beasts had the faculty of speech, the sheep said to her master, ' You act strangely, in granting nothing to us who supply you with wool, and lambs, and cheese, except what we get from the ground ; while to the dog, who brings you no such profits, you give a share of the food which you take yourself.' (14) The dog, hearing these remarks, said, ' Yes, by Jove ! for I am he that protects even yourselves, so that you are neither stolen by men, nor carried off by wolves ; while, if I were not to guard you, you would be unable even to feed

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

for lest you should be destroyed.' In consequence it is said that the sheep agreed that the dog should have superior honour. You, accordingly, tell your relations that you are, in the place of the dog, their guardian and protector, and that by your means they work and live in security and pleasure, without suffering injury from anyone."¹

After this Callias took up the discourse. "It is your turn now," says he, "Charmides, to tell us what reasons you have for valuing yourself so much upon poverty." "I will," replied Charmides, "and without delay. Is anything more certain than that it is better to be brave than a coward, a free man than a slave, to be credited than distrusted, to be inquired after for your conversation than to court others for theirs? These things, I believe, may be granted me without much difficulty; now when I was rich, I was in continual fear of having my house broken by thieves and my money stole, or my throat cut upon the account of it. Besides all this, I was forced to keep in fee with some of these pettifogging rascals that retain to the law, who swarm all over the town like so many locusts. This I was forced to do, because they were always in a condition to hurt me, and I had no way to retaliate upon them. Then I was obliged to bear public offices at my own charges, and to pay taxes; nor was it permitted me to go abroad to travel to avoid that expense. But now that my estate which I had without the frontiers of our republic is all gone, and my land in Attica brings me in no rent, and all my household goods are exposed to sale, I sleep wonderfully sound, and stretched upon my bed as one altogether fearless of officers. The Government is now no more jealous of me, nor I of it; thieves fright

¹ *Memorabilia*, ch. vii.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

me not, and I myself affright others. I travel abroad when I please ; and when I please I stay at Athens. What is to be free, if this is not ? Besides, rich men pay respect to me ; they run from me to leave me the chair or to give me the wall. In a word, I am now perfectly a king ; I was then perfectly a slave. I have yet another advantage from my poverty : I then paid tribute to the republic ; now the republic pays tribute to me ; for it maintains me. Then everyone snarled at me because I was often with Socrates ; now that I am poor I may converse with him or any other I please without anybody's being uneasy at it. I have yet another satisfaction : in the days of my estate either the Government or my ill fortune was continually clipping it ; now that is all gone, it is impossible to get anything of me, he that has nothing can lose nothing. And I have the continual pleasure of hoping to be worth something again one time or other."<sup>1</sup>

Socrates had thus, for the first time (after Hesiod), ventured to challenge the prevailing ideas of ancient Hellas concerning labour, to redeem it from the general contempt in which it was held. A French writer expressed the opinion that Socrates took no interest in politics,<sup>2</sup> but this must remain an open question. What we are warranted, however, to assert is that Socrates criticised the democracy of Greece, and the democratic institutions of his time. He also criticised tyranny, and all his political teaching was to the effect that he who wished to govern the State should first learn to govern himself, and that the common law of those who govern and of those who are governed should be justice.

Whilst, however, the Greek dramatists, the Sophists,

<sup>1</sup> Xenophon, *The Banquet* (Engl. transl. by J. Welwood).

<sup>2</sup> J. Denis, *Histoire des théories et des idées morales dans l'antiquité*.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN GREECE

and, to a certain extent, Socrates, criticised the Athenian democracy, because it was only a political and not a social democracy, Plato criticised the Athenian city-state because it was *too democratic*. As Plato's communism has often been praised and quoted, it will, perhaps, be necessary to give a brief outline of the great philosopher's ideas on social reform and labour.



**PLATO AND ARISTOTLE**





## CHAPTER VIII

### PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

PLATO'S ideas on democracy are the result of the economic *milieu* of ancient Hellas. In his famous dialogue, *Gorgias*, Plato called politics the science of the soul. Politics for him are ethics in action. They are based on morality. He exposed his political and social ideas in his *Republic*, in the *Statesmen*, and in the *Laws*. Plato, moreover, conceived the State in a truly Greek fashion, that is, as a city-state. The State is an individual *en grand*, whilst the individual is a state *en miniature*. A harmony and subordination of all the parts constituting the individual are necessary for its harmonious existence. In the State, too, intelligence, courage and appetitive qualities should work harmoniously in the interests of the whole. Unity is a *sine qua non*.

All ancient states, as we know, were composed of citizens, domiciled strangers, and slaves. The first duty of the law is to respect the individual liberty of the citizen. Each must have the right to order his own life and to do according to his own pleasure, provided that he does not in any way interfere with the liberty of his neighbour. But Plato saw things differently: the citizen was made for the State, not the State for the citizen. Moreover, the unity, stability, and happiness of the State required that each individual should exercise his own particular function and never overstep the bounds. The citizens would

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

then be classified according to their several occupations, and be correspondingly subordinate one to another. The existence of the State was a necessity, and it had to provide for its defence and maintain the principles of government as reason dictated. Accordingly, there existed three classes of citizens and three corresponding virtues: labourers and artisans, fighting-men, and patricians, with corresponding virtues of temperance, courage, and wisdom.

And each was to remain a fixture in his own class. But Plato, in arranging this division, ignored just two things: the liberty which is claimed by the citizen as citizen, and by man as man. We are not political and economic machines; chance makes us artisans, labourers, or soldiers. It is the right and duty of every human being to endeavour to develop to the full his individual personality, and when a constitution bars the way to this goal, it sins against morality and nature.

The Greek city could not do without slavery; but it is not a necessity in Plato's Republic, for of what use would slaves be here? To cultivate the ground? To manufacture furniture or arms? Or, briefly, to keep alive the unproductive citizens? But these are functions carried out by the third class of citizens, whom Plato desires the soldiers and sages to regard as brothers. Plato sees only three main functions necessary for the support of the State, and for each of these the citizens should be responsible. The Republic, which in many other respects reminds us of India, Egypt, and the worst aspects of the Greek city, is, as regards the organisation, a forerunner of modern states. Labourers and artisans provide for the subsistence of the State, the soldiers for its defence, the wise men for its administration. Slaves, therefore,



## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

are not required. "The class of artisans," says Plato, "is consecrate to Vulcan and Minerva, from whom we derive the necessary arts of life, as the class of these, who, by the help of other arts, protect and guarantee the work of the artisan, is consecrate to Mars and Minerva. Both are fellow-workers for the good of the nation."

What, according to the Greeks, legitimised slavery, was the fact that they considered manual labour derogatory, but Plato saw differently; for him, generals and soldiers worked to protect and save the country, the artisans and labourers to support it. They were part, one as much as the other, of the nation. No profession to him seemed unworthy, provided that it was honourably exercised. Who are more decried than the tradespeople on account of their cupidity and fraudulent methods? "Nevertheless," says Plato, "when tradesmen settle in a city their presence is not to be considered detrimental to the other citizens; on the contrary, are they not rather benefactors impartially distributing their goods of all kinds to satisfy the needs of all? Money is the medium between buyer and seller, and so it comes about that foreign merchants, mercenaries, hotel-keepers, and others of similar occupation, establish themselves in order to provide for the wants of each individual by making common provision for all of the necessities of life."

And so Plato does not mention slavery in connection with his Republic, and it is not that he simply forgot to do so. As the more servile occupation can be undertaken without dishonour by the citizens, the city suffices for itself, without the iniquity of slavery. Moreover, Plato was well aware how embarrassing and dangerous it is to try and justify the possession of slaves. "Man," he says, "is a difficult animal to

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

manage, and it takes an infinite amount of trouble to get him to acquiesce in this distinction of free and enslaved, master and serf."

Plato, although despising slaves in the condition to which they had been reduced, was not the man to believe that they were of a different species to the free man. "As for these," he says, "who boast of their noble descent, of their many wealthy forbears and freedom," the philosopher only thinks how short-sighted they are, and how ignorant not to be able to take a larger, more widely embracing view of things, for can they not calculate even that every human being has had millions of ancestors, an infinite number among which must have been some rich, some poor, kings and slaves, Greeks and barbarians?

Aristotle, and the greater number of the Greeks, looked upon slaves as incapable of virtuous qualities; but Plato acknowledges that he has met many on whose fidelity he could as surely count as on that of a brother or a son, and who have generously sacrificed themselves to save the life, goods, honour, or family of their masters. He was not forced, therefore, by any reason, or any prejudice, to consent to slavery, but he accepts it in the *Laws*, because the State he is here describing is that of a Greek city, and not the ideal city. But, as we see from above quotations, it is only with great repugnance that he allows an institution so contrary to all nature and justice.

Though not entirely sharing the prejudices of his compatriots as regards foreigners, asserting that the King of Persia is at least on an equality with the noble Greeks, that the Egyptians are the wisest among men, and that one may come across men of true holiness among barbarians, he still admits the Greek division of our species into two naturally hostile parties; and



## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

though we find in him the love, not of any particular city, but of his country as a whole, *we never trace any love of humanity*. And yet Plato, to whom human beings are nothing except in so far as they participate in the Idea, speaks continually of man in himself (man as an identity) in the same way as he speaks of absolute good and of absolute beauty. But what then is man in himself, if not humanity itself? We have to distinguish in Plato between metaphysics and ethics; his metaphysics are universal, his ethics are not. He might, and he ought to, have recognised the unity of the human race; but neither his philosophy nor his logic raised him above the prejudices of his fellow-countrymen.

And what I have said with regard to this particular point is true of his ethics throughout the *Republic* and the *Laws*. In them we find two trends of thought constantly at war with one another, one born of the wider conception of the universal and the divine, and one wonders how two such diverse trends could have been harboured by the philosopher. The explanation, however, is very simple; what happened to Plato happens to all innovators who, not content with striving to inculcate a new spirit, want to reconstruct the whole social order: to build the new with *old* material. And as he did not see beyond his immediate surroundings of Greece and of Asia—Greece in a state of ferment, but vibrating with energetic life; Asia, a great body without courage and animation, that had twice succumbed before an attack of a handful of brave men—he could only construct his state out of the essential and vitalising elements of the Greek city. For what is his Republic but Sparta improved and perfected, sometimes exaggerated, plus a senate of philosophers? We must look up, Plato tells us, and



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

rise above man-made laws, and establish something better than a state of mere organised factions ; and what we meet everywhere in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* is the narrow, hard, cruel, intolerant, cavilling, and mean spirit of Lycurgus or of a petty Greek city. His state is to cherish the arts and virtues of peace, and the training of his citizens is almost entirely a warlike one ; he values temperance as a condition inseparable from every virtue, and his soldiers are promised rewards suggestive of the home of harems. Reason is to dominate institutions, and politics, and he enslaves reason. He wishes to make perfect men, and he only makes automata. Finally, he is indignant with those who render the soul of the slave a thousand times more slavish by blows and floggings, and slaves in his *Laws* are treated in the most inhuman manner.

The mind of the political philosopher was no less enslaved by Lycurgus, than conquered Greece by Sparta. Human nature had counted for nothing with the Spartan lawgiver. "Plato denaturalised man in seeking to perfect him and render him happy."

It is impossible to say how much Plato owed to Greece, if we take into consideration only the general ideas on which his fame is founded. But they do not show us the whole Plato. In him were two men, the philosopher and the Greek citizen, and the two are not always in perfect agreement. We have to examine these two men apart from one another if we wish to arrive at a just estimate of Plato, and account for his not exercising more influence over his generation.

Much is said about Plato's Utopian ideas. If he ignored the most natural institutions and most sacred affections to run after a chimerically-ordered state ;

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

if he replaced by the strictest discipline the free development of man's faculties, and drills the citizens of his Republic as if they were so many automata ; if he sacrifices the individual to the State, and has an almost puerile mania for bringing everything into bondage to hard-and-fast rules. All this, say his admirers, is only because he is intoxicated with the eternal, and struggles to bring amity into the world which is incompatible with the changes and chances of mortal life—an immobility which is irreconcilable with the mobility of the human spirit.

On the whole, however, Plato, in imagining unrealisable Utopias, was less the prey to chimerical ideas than when he strove to push actual institutions to the extreme limit of their possibilities. Sharing the general infatuation for Sparta, autocratic by nature and education, and hating the turbulent liberty of democratic states, he pictured the ideal state as a mingling of the warlike aristocracy of Sparta and the theocracy of Egypt. Discipline and immutability, these were the two corner-stones of a state. So he re-established caste, delivering it from iniquitous seclusion ; he confirmed the already narrow spirit of the Dorian city ; he adopted every institution which sacrificed individual liberty to the domination of the State, and *as this latter could not come to terms with humanity as a whole*, he pitilessly mutilated human nature by a general application of the communistic teachings of Lycurgus.

Hating democracy and admiring Sparta—yet even Sparta was not sufficiently autocratic to please him—he turned to theocratic Egypt to avoid the lively democracy of the Pnyx and the Piræus. And by one of those sophisms so natural to those who feel pessimistic about anything, Plato found in his most abstract

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

metaphysical beliefs a justification for his hates and for his political prejudices.

Thus the Platonic Utopias were neither more nor less than the idealised revival of Lysurgian institutions.

As a philosopher, Plato revealed to man the beauty of the invisible world, the immortality of the soul and divine hope. And has one of these ideas ever perished? Is there one that has not been studied afresh by the greatest thinkers?

But as a dreamer of Utopias he was a Greek, a man whose ill feeling towards Athens overpowered his reason; and, strange to say, the dreams that have led men to look upon him as the prince of fantastic idealists were nearly all facts in Greece.

Plato is an idealist and an aristocrat, and aims at a government of the intellectual aristocracy.

The gospel of equality—the gospel preached by the prophets, and by many philosophers since the era of rationalism, could not appeal to the Greek aristocrat. The contradiction between moral superiority and exploitation of one's fellow-men did not occur to him. Democracy, whether political, social, or economic, was distasteful to him. Just as the individual who wishes to attain virtue must make his appetites and passions and all the baser elements of his nature subservient to reason, so the State, too, should make the baser parts of the organism subservient to a strict discipline, exercised by reason, which is represented by the philosophers.

The individual does not interest Plato; it is the welfare of the commonwealth, of the entity, he has at heart, and therefore he ever sacrifices the individual to the State. He differs, in this respect, from the old prophets and from modern social reformers, who preach *the respect of the individual*. The sages of the



## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Talmud teach that he who saves one individual is like unto a man who has observed all the prescriptions of the law. It is this Platonic idea, the contempt of the individual, which makes men launch wars and sacrifice millions of human individuals for the welfare of the community. Nominally so only—for in reality the millions are sacrificed not for the benefit and welfare of the whole community, but of a small minority consisting of individuals who exercise a control over the government.

Plato cannot be said to have preached the gospel either of social justice or of labour. He is no lover of the proletariat and of the working-classes. Plato's communism has been many a time and oft quoted as a model in modern times, but his communism is aristocratic and not democratic. A scion of an aristocratic family, he had inherited all the ideas and prejudices inherent in his class. Plato the idealist demanded a more just and equitable treatment of slaves, but he held the demos in contempt. He not only considered slavery as justified, but also cautioned the citizens of his ideal state against too great clemency.<sup>1</sup>

Plato's ideal state, and his subdivision into three classes, may have served as a prototype to the various Utopias; it may also have influenced the mediæval division of the population into what is called in Germany *Wehr-Lehr und Nährstand*; but we should not think that the Kingdom of Heaven could be compared to Plato's ideal state, as has been done by the eminent German philosopher Zeller.<sup>2</sup> And when Nietzsche says that "Christianity is Plato for the people," it is only one more of those attractive paradoxes of the poet-philosopher.

<sup>1</sup> Wallon, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Zeller, *Vorträge*, vol. i, pp. 68, 69, 79.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

On the Pisgah heights of the idea, in the icy atmosphere of contempt, Plato had conceived his ideal state—an ideal state wherein aristocracy of intellect should live in the blissful state of communism, served and waited upon by the proletarians. Democracy, no less than oligarchy and plutocracy, are mercilessly lashed by the whip of criticism and wit.<sup>1</sup>

“Plato was,” to use the words which Nietzsche applied to Heraclit, “a royal and splendid inmate of the realm of spirit.”

Government is to be in the hands of the philosopher whom he intends to produce, and only then, after the dictatorship of the aristocracy of intellect, the era of socialism would begin. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the doctrine of modern Bolshevism, is thus a reversion of Plato's ideal. Only when a new man has been evolved in his ideal state, the old Adam properly killed, and the *Ueberschensch* created, will it be time to introduce the era of social justice. In the meantime the proletarians should work, so as to allow the intelligenzia to rule and to propagate the new species of *Ueberschensch*.<sup>2</sup>

The collective happiness of the State Plato places above the happiness of the individual, this happiness of the State consisting in the realisation of justice.

Plato's principal idea, wrote Zeller (p. 78), was the realisation of ethics and morality through the State; it was the purpose of the State to bring up the citizens to virtue, and the State was consequently a vast educational establishment. With this aim in view, all other interests must be sacrificed. Plato, therefore, does not hesitate to postulate as an essential condition

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 564b; B. Poehlmann, loc. cit., i. p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> Stein, loc. cit., p. 204.

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

of his State an inequality of men. His very communism is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. His communism is not applied to the third class, the *Nähr* class, among whom he reckons peasants, merchants, and artisans, but merely to the classes of rulers and warriors, so that, freed from the cares of private property, free from the fatigues of labour, they would be able to devote their entire time to the higher occupations. It would be wrong, therefore, to class Plato in the same category as Lafargue and others who say that man's destiny is to be idle. Plato is distinctly in favour of work ; he mercilessly lashes the idle rich who lead a life of leisure—of *dolce far niente*. But where Plato is in direct opposition to the Labour prophets of modern times is in his contempt for manual and industrial labour. Neither can it be asserted that there is really any social justice in a state in which the working-classes are excluded from all political activity, and where all the privileges are enjoyed by the upper thousand or ten thousand. It is neither a communistic state nor a democratic state. It is neither social nor just. Whether personally we consider such a state as “a consummation devoutly to be wished” is another matter.

Plato once refers to the economic welfare of the citizens which has given rise to the class of peasants, agriculturists, artisans, and traders, but to such a primitive state he refers as a state of pigs.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst, on the one hand, Plato considers it as the duty of the State to increase happiness and not wealth, and warns the State against an accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few,<sup>2</sup> his idea of the division of labour

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 369b.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 421d.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
is based upon the principle of human inequality. Whilst criticising the idle rich, Plato accuses the proletariat of subordinating the interests of the community to class interest. "They demand political power so as to have the opportunity and possibility of plundering the commonwealth in favour of the hungry and of the beggars."<sup>1</sup>

How different is Plato's conception of the individual from the ideas expressed in the Old and New Testaments, from the views held by the prophets of Israel and by the Founder of Christianity. Professor Dewey rightly remarks<sup>2</sup> that in every individual there lives the possibility of being a king and a priest. Such is the democratic teaching of both the Old and the New Testament.

#### ARISTOTLE

Aristotle is more practical than Plato, and differs in some respects from his great master with regard to the State and democracy.

Aristotle draws a striking picture of all the virtues, among which, however, justice and friendship occupy the place of honour. Justice! neither the evening star nor the morning star inspire so much respect. Justice is an aggregate of all the virtues; justice may be defined as the good of others.<sup>3</sup>

In spite, however, of his philosophical analysis of justice, the Greek philosopher's conception of *social* justice was far removed from the ideas of an Amos or an Isaiah. Aristotle was a Greek of the Greeks. He had all the ideas of the ancient Greeks, and was influenced by his environment.

The Law and the State are for Aristotle what they are for Plato. The aim of law is to establish equality

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 512a.

<sup>2</sup> Dewey, *Ethics of Democracy*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Janet, *loc. cit.*, p. 181.

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

among the citizens, and thereby to bring them into harmony and friendship with one another. The State strives to establish virtue and peace, it is a community of equals and brothers. But Aristotle's fraternity does not, like Plato's, go so far as to forgive insults, nor to inculcate the philanthropy and charity of the Stoics. If philosophy conceives of a society where men live together as brothers, the Greek never forgets the strict demands of natural rights, "where men render evil for evil—otherwise society would be in a state of servitude, where they return good for good—otherwise there would be no sense of community, no exchange of service. Society is upheld by the interchange of friendship and kindness." Beyond certain general principles, Aristotle's *Politics* contain nothing about the duties and rights which men owe to one another. True, he refutes and regrets the idea of Plato's Utopian Republic; he recognises and upholds the natural and legitimate claims of family and property; but he does not dwell upon them. Only, as Plato had perhaps exaggerated the rôle of women in the State, Aristotle reduces it to that which they filled in the Greek Republics. If he speaks of husband and wife having each a special function to fill as regards the family, and each having the right to order and command within the limits of that function, he soon after returns to the enunciation of the principle that authority belongs solely by right to the man, as he alone possesses a fully-developed will. Opposed, however, to Plato's excessive aristocracy is Aristotle's moderate democratic philosophy. Whilst Plato conceived the State as an ideal unity, of which the individuals are mere accidents, Aristotle saw in the State a collection of individuals differing from each other. Aristotle's definitions of democracy

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

are interesting. They are given all through his *Politics*. A few passages, however, will suffice to give the reader an idea what Aristotle thinks of democracy :

“ We ought not to define a democracy as some do, who say simply that it is a government where the supreme power is lodged in the people ; for even in oligarchies the supreme power is in the majority. Nor should they define an oligarchy a government where the supreme power is in the hands of a few ; for let us suppose the number of a people to be thirteen hundred, and that of these one thousand were rich, who would not permit the three hundred poor to have any share in the government, although they were free, and their equal in everything else ; no one would say that this government was a democracy. In like manner, if the poor, when few in number, should acquire the power over the rich though more than themselves, no one would say that this was an oligarchy ; nor this, when the rest who are rich have no share in the administration. We should rather say, *that a democracy is when the supreme power is in the hands of the freemen* ; and oligarchy, when it is in the hands of the rich, it happens, indeed, that in the one case the many will possess it, in the other the few ; because there are many poor and few rich. And if the power of the State was to be distributed according to the size of the citizens, as they say it is in Æthiopia, or according to their beauty, it would be an oligarchy : for the number of those who are large and beautiful is small.

“ Nor are those things which we have already mentioned alone sufficient to describe these states ; for since there are many species both of a democracy and



## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

an oligarchy, the matter requires further consideration ; as we cannot admit that, if a few persons who are free possess the supreme power over the many who are not free, this government is a democracy : as in Apollonia, in Iona, and in Thera ; for in each of these cities the honours of the State belong to some few particular families, who first founded the colonies. Nor would the rich, because they are superior in numbers, form a democracy, as formerly at Colophon ; for there the majority had large possessions before the Lydian War ; but a democracy is a state where the freemen and the poor, being the majority, are invested with the power of the State. An oligarchy is a state where the rich and those of noble families, being few, possess it.”<sup>1</sup>

“ The most pure democracy is that which is so called principally from that equality which prevails in it ; for this is what the law in that state directs : that the poor shall be in no greater subjection than the rich ; nor that the supreme power shall be lodged with either of these, but that both shall share it. For if liberty and equality, as some persons suppose, are chiefly to be found in a democracy, it must be most so by every department of government being alike open to all ; but as the people are the majority, and what they vote is law, it follows that such a state must be a democracy. This, then, is one species thereof. Another is, when the magistrates are elected by a certain census ; but this should be but small, and everyone who was included in it should be eligible, but as soon as he was below it should lose that right. Another sort is, in which every citizen who is not infamous has a share in the government, but where

<sup>1</sup> *Politics*, book iv, ch. iv, 1290b.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

every citizen without exception has this right. Another is like these in other particulars, but there the people govern, and not the law ; and this takes place when everything is determined by a majority of votes, and not by a law ; which happens when the people are influenced by the demagogues : for where a democracy is governed by stated laws there is no room for them, but men of worth fill the first offices in the State ; but where the power is not vested in the laws, there demagogues abound : for there the people rule with kingly power, the whole composing one body ; for they are supreme, not as individuals, but in their collective capacity.

*“ Homer also discommends the government of many ; but whether he means this we are speaking of, or where each person exercises his power separately, is uncertain. When the people possess this power they desire to be altogether absolute, that they may not be under the control of the law, and this is the time when flatterers are held in repute. Nor is there any difference between such a people and monarchs in a tyranny ; for their manners are the same, and they both hold a despotic power over better persons than themselves. For their decrees are like the other’s edicts ; their demagogues like the other’s flatterers ; but their greatest resemblance consists in the mutual support they give to each other, the flatterer to the tyrant, the demagogue to the people ; and to them it is owing that the supreme power is lodged in the votes of the people, and not in the laws : for they bring everything before them, as their influence is owing to their being supreme whose opinions they entirely direct ; for these are they whom the multitude obey. Besides, those who accuse the magistrates insist upon it, that the right of determining on their conduct lies in the*

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

people who gladly receive their complaints as the means of destroying all their offices.

“Anyone, therefore, may with great justice blame such a Government as being a democracy, and not a free state; for where the government is not in the laws, then there is no free state, for the law ought to be supreme over all things, and particular incidents which arise should be determined by the magistrates of the State. If, therefore, a democracy is to be reckoned a free state, it is evident that any such establishment which centres all power in the votes of the people cannot, properly speaking, be a democracy; for their decrees cannot be general in their extent. Thus, then, we may describe the several species of democracies.”<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle evidently does not like demagogues and so-called representatives of the people. In another place of his *Politics* he accuses democracy in general, and the demagogues in particular, of fostering revolutions.

“We ought now to inquire into those events which will arise from these causes in every species of government. Democracies will be most subject to revolutions from the dishonesty of their demagogues; for partly, by informing against men of property, they induce them to join together through self-defence, for a common fear will make the greatest enemies unite; and partly by setting the common people against them: and this is what any one may continually see practised in many states. In the island of Cos, for instance, the democracy was subverted by the wickedness of the demagogues, for the nobles entered into a

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 1292a.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

combination with each other. And at Rhodes the demagogues, by distributing of bribes, prevented the people from paying the trierarchs what was owing to them, who were obliged by the number of actions they were harassed with to conspire together and destroy the popular state. The same thing was brought about at Heraclea, soon after the settlement of the city, by the same persons, for the citizens of note, being ill treated by them, quitted the city, but afterwards, joining together, they returned and overthrew the popular state. Just in the same manner the democracy was destroyed in Megara ; for there the demagogues, to procure money by confiscations, drove out the nobles, till the number of those who were banished was considerable, who, returning, got the better of the people in a battle, and established an oligarchy. The like happened at Cume, during the time of the democracy, which Trasymachus destroyed ; and whoever considers what has happened in other states may perceive the same revolutions to have arisen from the same causes. *The demagogues, to curry favour with the people, drive the nobles to conspire together, either by dividing their states or obliging them to spend them on public services, or by banishing them, that they may confiscate the fortunes of the wealthy.* In former times, when the same person was both demagogue and general, the democracies were changed into tyrannies ; and, indeed, most of the ancient tyrannies arose from those states : a reason for which then subsisted, but not now ; for at that time the demagogues were of the soldiery ; for they were not then powerful by their eloquence ; but, *now the art of oratory is cultivated, the able speakers are at present the demagogues ;* but as they are unqualified to act in a military capacity, they cannot impose themselves on

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

the people as tyrants, if we except in one or two trifling instances.”<sup>1</sup>

I have said above that Aristotle conceived the State as a collection of individuals.

But Aristotle's individualism differs considerably from the individualism of a Spencer<sup>2</sup> or the individualism of a Leroy-Beaulieu.<sup>3</sup> Who are, in Aristotle's opinion, the individual citizens constituting the State? The essential characteristic trait of a citizen is his participation in public functions, those who deliberate on public affairs or mete out justice, i.e. are judges. Now, as the principle of State is the exercise of virtue—not perfect virtue, but political virtue—virtue means devotion to the State. The real citizen is he who is possessed of virtue. In order to be able to cultivate virtue, the State must live, and in order to live it must possess goods which assure its sustenance and instruments, living or inanimate, necessary for the production of such goods. Now, according to Aristotle, everyone who works, either for an individual or for the State, nay, everyone who works for his own living, an artisan, a trader, even when he is politically free, is not a citizen, but in reality—that is, socially—a slave.<sup>4</sup>

To work for others or to occupy oneself with some mechanical profession is a sign of slavery. The former is the sign of utter dependence upon another man, whilst the latter renders us unworthy of the noble acquisition of virtue. It consequently follows that all artisans and all those who work for a living cannot and ought not to be citizens; they are only

<sup>1</sup> *Politics*, book v., ch. v., 1304b–1305b.

<sup>2</sup> See Spencer, *The Man versus the State*.

<sup>3</sup> See Leroy-Beaulieu, *Collectivisme*.

<sup>4</sup> *Politics*, v. 1278a, 11.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY considered as such, says Aristotle, in a few corrupted democracies.

Thus Aristotle divides society into two classes : free men, citizens who enjoy the leisure necessary for the noble occupation of virtue, and do not bend their noble statures to the burden of labour ; and the artisans, and slaves dependent upon the free men whose sustenance it is their duty to procure. The latter are the members of the State and the masters of the State, the former are its *subjects* and its instruments. *Leisure, therefore, is the real title of citizenship.*<sup>1</sup> When Aristotle, however, speaks of leisure, he does not mean idleness ; he means the occupation of the spirit with noble things, as distinguished from manual labour. Mechanics therefore, or any other members of a class which is not a producer of virtue, have no share in the State.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Barker, in his admirable work, *Greek Political Theory*, admits that " The Greek philosophers unite in postulating for the citizens of their ideal cities, abundant leisure for high things, in admitting slavery as the necessary basis of that leisure, and in excluding from full participation in the State those who have not the leisure they consider necessary." <sup>3</sup>

Plato postulates a communism which he limits only to his two upper classes, the guardians, and his purpose is to make them free and independent of labour.<sup>4</sup> Plato thus differs considerably, in theory at least, from modern communism, whose aim is to make workers of all, and thus shorten the hours of labour. I said in theory, for in practice, in the only Socialist State established in the twentieth century, in Russia,

<sup>1</sup> Moreau-Christophe, *Droit à l'Oisiveté*.

<sup>2</sup> *Politics*, 1329a.

<sup>3</sup> E. Barker, *Greek Political Theory, Plato and his Predecessors*, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Zimmern, *Greek Commonwealth*, part iii, ch. vi and xv. Gomperz against Barker, p. 163 note.



## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

the distinction between the guardians who have leisure for higher things and are free from all the cares and worries of existence, and the lower classes, the working-classes, who slave and labour for these guardians, is truly platonic. The only difference is that, whilst in the Republic of Plato it is the guardians alone who have no gold, in the Soviet Republic it is the guardians alone who *have* gold.

As for both, Aristotle and Plato, the highest good consists in scientific contemplation, both the Stagirite and his master consider the exercise of virtue inseparable from leisure. The labours of farmers, artisans, and mechanics are, therefore, irreconcilable with the exercise of virtue. These three—farmers, working-men, and traders—all producers of commodities, have no share in the government; they are even refused the rights of citizens. Plato did not banish commerce and industry from his ideal state, but they were interdicted to the citizen, and should be conducted by aliens. It must be admitted, however, that, in spite of his Greek conception of justice, Aristotle is socially democratic, as compared with Plato. Plato prefers a benevolent tyrant; and his ruling philosophers resemble somewhat the priests of the East. Plato confounds the family with the State, and even in his *Laws* he makes concessions only reluctantly, whilst Aristotle is in favour of the sovereignty of the greatest number, and places the law above the authority of man.<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle holds but one doctrine of interest as regards mankind in general, and that is his theory concerning slavery. Plato reluctantly admitted it as a political necessity; Aristotle looks upon it as a natural right.

There are numerous philosophers and advanced

<sup>1</sup> Hartman, *Das Sittliche Bewusstsein, Freiheit und Gleichheit*.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

thinkers who accept current ideas and theories, political and economic institutions, submitting to them simply because these ideas and institutions happen to exist. Aristotle not only accepts the fact of slavery, but he explains and justifies the right and reason and justice of slavery. Instead, however, of invoking, in defence of slavery, the right of the stronger, the authority of established convention, he endeavours to discover a philosophic principle in favour of slavery. "There are men who are slaves by a natural law." The right of the stronger does not justify the state of slavery. Neither violence nor law could make one man, who is the equal of another or his superior, the latter's slave. The right to command must be based upon superiority and merit. Nature, however, has made it necessary that man should command the animals just as the soul commands the body, and there are men, those whose manual labour is their only useful occupation, who ought to be commanded, and whose duty it is to obey. They are slaves by nature.

The result of Aristotle's social philosophy is that not only the slave, but also the free labourer, the agriculturist, and the artisan, who contribute to the maintenance and sustenance of society, are destined for slavery or serfdom.

Free men are only those who are provided for and waited upon by the latter, and who are thus enabled to devote their time to the occupation worthy of man—politics, war, or philosophy. In a word, slavery and serfdom are not only necessary, but also natural. Aristotle's philosophy of slavery is given in his *Politics*, and I will quote a few passages :

"Since then a subsistence is necessary in every family, the means of procuring it certainly makes up

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

part of the management of a family, for without necessities it is impossible to live, and to live well. As in all arts which are brought to perfection, it is necessary that they should have their proper instruments if they would complete their works, so is it in the art of managing a family : now, of instruments some of them are alive, others inanimate ; thus with respect to the pilot of the ship, the tiller is without life, the sailor is alive ; for a servant is as an instrument in many arts. Thus property is as an instrument to living ; an estate is a multitude of instruments ; so a slave is an animated instrument, but everyone that can minister of himself is more valuable than any other instrument ; for if every instrument, at command, or from a preconception of its master's will, could accomplish its works (as the story goes of the statues of Dædalus, or what the poet tells us of the tripods of Vulcan, " that they moved of their own accord into the assembly of the gods "), the shuttle would then weave and the lyre play of itself ; nor would the architect want servants, or the master slaves. Now what are generally called instruments are the efficient of something else, but possessions are what we simply use : thus with a shuttle we make something else for our use ; but we only use a coat, or a bed ; since the making and using differ from each other in species, and they both require their instruments, it is necessary that these should be different from each other. Now, life is itself what we use, and not what we employ as the efficient of something else ; for which reason the services of a slave are for use considered in the same nature as a part of anything ; now, a part is not only a part of something, but also is nothing else ; so is a possession ; therefore a master is only the master of the slave, but no part of him ; but the slave is not



only the slave of the master, but nothing else but that. This fully explains what is the nature of a slave, and what are his capacities ; for that being who by nature is nothing of himself, but totally another's, and is a man, is a slave by nature ; and that man who is the property of another is his mere chattel though he continues a man ; but a chattel is an instrument for use, separate from the body."<sup>1</sup>

"But whether any person is such by nature, and whether it is advantageous and just for anyone to be a slave or no, or whether all slavery is contrary to nature, shall be considered hereafter, not that it is difficult to determine it upon general principles, or to understand it from matters of fact, for that some should govern, and others be governed, is not only necessary but useful, and from the hour of their birth some are marked out for those purposes, and others for the other, and there are many species of both sorts. And the better those are who are governed the better also is the government, as, for instance, of man rather than the brute creation : for the more excellent the materials are with which the work is finished, the more excellent certainly is the work ; and wherever there is a governor and a governed, there certainly is some work produced ; for whatsoever is composed of many parts, which jointly become one, whether conjunct or separate, evidently show the marks of governing and governed ; and this is true of every living thing in all nature, nay, even in some things which partake not of life, as in music ; but this probably would be a disquisition too foreign to our present purpose. Every living thing, in the first place, is composed of soul and body ; of these the one is by

<sup>1</sup> *Politics*, 1253b-1255b (Engl. transl. by W. Ellis).

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

nature the governor, the other the governed ; now, if we would know what is natural, we ought to search for it in those subjects in which nature appears most perfect, and not in those which are corrupted ; we should therefore examine into a man who is most perfectly formed both in soul and body, in whom this is evident, for in the depraved and vicious the body seems to rule rather than the soul, on account of their being corrupt and contrary to nature. We may then, as we affirm, perceive in an animal the first principles of herile and political government ; for the soul governs the body as the master governs his slave ; the mind governs the appetite with a political or a kingly power, which shows that it is both natural and advantageous that the body should be governed by the soul, and the pathetic part by the mind, and that part which is possessed of reason ; but to have no ruling power, or an improper one, is hurtful to all ; and this holds true not only of man, but of other animals also, for tame animals are naturally better than wild ones, and it is advantageous that they should be under subjection to man ; for this is productive of their common safety : so is naturally with the male and the female ; the one is superior, the other inferior ; the one governs, the other is governed ; and the same rule must necessarily hold good with respect to all mankind. Those men, therefore, who are as much inferior to the others as the body is to the soul are to be thus disposed of, as the proper use of them is their bodies, in which their excellence consists ; and if what I have said be true, they are slaves by nature, and it is advantageous to them to be always under government. He, then, is by nature formed a slave who is qualified to become the chattel of another person, and on that account is so, and who has just reason enough to know that there



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

is such a faculty, without being indued with the use of it ; for other animals have no perception of reason, but are entirely guided by appetite, and indeed they vary very little in their use from each other ; for the advantage which we receive, both from slaves and tame animals, arises from their bodily strength administering to our necessities ; for it is the intention of nature to make the bodies of slaves and free men different from each other, that the one should be robust for their necessary purposes, the others erect, useless, indeed, for what slaves are employed in, but fit for civil life, which is divided into the duties of war and peace ; though these rules do not always take place, for slaves have sometimes the bodies of free men, sometimes the souls ; if, then, it is evident that if some bodies are as much more excellent than others as the statues of the gods excel the human form, everyone will allow that the inferior ought to be slaves to the superior ; and if this is true with respect to the body, it is still juster to determine in the same manner, when we consider the soul ; though it is not so easy to perceive the beauty of the soul as it is of the body. Since, then, some men are slaves by nature, and others are free men, it is clear that where slavery is advantageous to anyone, then it is just to make him a slave.”<sup>1</sup>

“ But it is not difficult to perceive that those who maintain the contrary opinion have some reason on their side ; for a man may become a slave two different ways ; for he may be so by law also, and this law is a certain compact, by which whatsoever is taken in battle is adjudged to be the property of the conquerors ; but many persons who are conversant in law call in question this pretended right, and say that it would be hard that a man should be compelled by violence

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 1254b-1255a.



## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

to be the slave and subject of another who had the power to compel him, and was his superior in strength ; and upon this subject, even of those who are wise, some think one way and some another ; but the cause of this doubt and variety of opinions arises from hence, that great abilities, when accompanied with proper means, are generally able to succeed by force : for victory is always owing to a superiority in some advantageous circumstances ; so that it seems that force never prevails but in consequence of great abilities. But still the dispute concerning the justice of it remains ; for some persons think that justice consists in benevolence, others think it just that the powerful should govern ; in the midst of these contrary opinions, there are no reasons sufficient to convince us, that the right of being master and governor ought not to be placed with those who have the greatest abilities. Some persons, entirely resting upon the right which the law gives (for that which is legal is in some respects just), insist upon it that slavery occasioned by war is just, not that they say it is wholly so, for it may happen that the principle upon which the wars were commenced is unjust ; moreover, no one will say that a man who is unworthily in slavery is therefore a slave ; for if so, men of the noblest families might happen to be slaves, and the descendants of slaves, if they should chance to be taken prisoners in war and sold : to avoid this difficulty, they say that such persons should not be called slaves, but barbarians only should ; but when they say this, they do nothing more than inquire who is a slave by nature, which was what we at first said ; for we must acknowledge that there are some persons who, wherever they are, must necessarily be slaves, but others in no situation ; thus also it is with those of noble descent : it is

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

not only in their own country that they are esteemed as such, but everywhere, but the barbarians are respected on this account at home only ; as if nobility and freedom were of two sorts, the one universal, the other not so. Thus says the Helen of Theodectes :

“ Who dares reproach me with the name of slave ?  
When from the immortal gods, on either side,  
I draw my lineage.”

Those who express sentiments like these show only that they distinguish the slave and the freeman, the noble and the ignoble from each other by their virtues and their vices ; for they think it reasonable, that as a man begets a man, and a beast a beast, so from a good man, a good man should be descended ; and this is what nature desires to do, but frequently cannot accomplish it. It is evident, then, that this doubt has some reason in it, and that these persons are not slaves, and those freemen, by the appointment of nature ; and also that in some instances it is sufficiently clear, that it is advantageous to both parties for this man to be a slave, and that to be a master, and that it is right and just that some should be governed, and others govern in the manner that nature intended ; of which sort of government is that which a master exercises over a slave. But to govern ill is disadvantageous to both ; for the same thing is useful to the part and to the whole, to the body and to the soul ; but the slave is, as it were, a part of the master, as if he were an animated part of his body, though separate. For which reason a mutual utility and friendship may subsist between the master and the slave, I mean when they are placed by nature in that relation to each other, for the contrary takes place

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

amongst those who are reduced to slavery by the law, or by conquest.”<sup>1</sup>

Plato had conceived a state which was able to dispense with slavery ; if he allowed it, it was because he despaired of carrying out his ideals, or because he feared to upset established order. For, if slavery is a social evil, it can only be tolerated in so far as it is absolutely necessary. To accept it otherwise is to become an accomplice in iniquity.

But the State, as conceived by Aristotle, was absolutely bound to adopt slavery. To the honour of Aristotle, however, let it be said that, such was his love of justice, if he had seen any iniquity in slavery, he would never have admitted that it was necessary. It is as well to emphasise two points in this connection : namely, that slavery had been accepted as a necessity by the political thought of the whole ancient world, and secondly that this necessity was allowed by Aristotle because he considered slavery a natural and legitimate institution.<sup>2</sup>

Slavery supplies an explanation of the whole ancient world, and in supporting it Aristotle did more than any other to bring it into discredit.

Widespread among the Greeks was the idea that the citizen should be a man of leisure, and that his whole life should be occupied in preparing for or fulfilling his civic duties. For, as Euripides declared on the stage before a commercial and democratic audience, “ the man who lives by manual labour, and whose coarse occupations keep him in a state of ignorance, is incapable of taking part in public affairs ; and, on the other hand, one cannot be an actual citizen if one is not either a soldier, judge, or member of senate.”

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 1255a-1256a.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Denis, loc. cit.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Aristotle embraced these ideas with the usual courage of his logic. Others, among them Xenophon, have made an exception of agricultural labour, those employed in it being considered fit by them to become citizens and soldiers.

But Aristotle will not entertain the thought of a citizen of noble stature stooping to work that might injure the body. And who, then, is to do the work necessary to man's existence? If it is unworthy of the free citizen, it must be that there are inferior beings among mankind whom nature has destined for this employment, which excludes them from being capable of virtue or of citizenship. He is astonished that it should be said "the power of the master is against nature, that law alone, and not nature, sets a difference between the free man and the slave; in short, slavery is iniquitous, for it is founded on violence." Those who think this confuse two questions. "No doubt," says Aristotle, "it is horrible that the stronger should make the conquered one his victim and slave; for so any man, however honourably born, might be reduced by a stronger to servitude." But in disputing over this matter of slavery, he is not concerned about these accidental and unlawful cases, but is taking into consideration only the slavery of those who are born to it, and have no right to be anything but slaves. They can never become citizens, for they are incapable both of commanding or obeying. The slave has sufficient understanding to be able to receive orders, but nothing beyond that; no more than Vulcan's tripods of which Homer tells us, that at a sign or word of command they performed their right duties. He has no power of choice, or of will. In man, will is fully developed, in a child it is there but imperfect, in a slave it is non-existent. So Aristotle

## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

firmly asserts. Slavery is therefore a benefit to this poor creature, and as domestic animals are of more value than wild ones, the lower beings are better employed as slaves than left to themselves. The slave is a living part of his master ; he is the latter's tool, as the body is the instrument of the soul. Nature having made each such as he is, a common interest unites them, and there is a mutual tie of good feeling. If the slave is what Aristotle described him to be, it follows that he is incapable of virtue or of happiness, that there can be no natural bond between him and his master, nor any possibility of friendship.

Can we expect prudence, courage, justice, or other like qualities in a slave ? " There are difficulties on both sides," says Aristotle. " If slaves possess these virtues, in what do they differ from free men ? If you deny them the possession, the question is equally difficult—for they are human beings and possess their share of reason." Aristotle's solution leaves one amazed : " We have already determined that the use and function of the slave is in connection with the necessities of existence. Virtue, therefore, is not needed by him except in so far as it keeps him to the strict performance of his duty, and prevents him from neglecting his allotted tasks through idleness or intemperance." Even virtue to this degree does not issue from himself—the master is the principle of virtue to the slave.<sup>1</sup>

Again, there is no community of rights between master and slave ; such only exists between equals. There are no rights between slaves themselves. Otherwise a state might exist composed of slaves, or other animals, which would be absurd, as a republic is not

<sup>1</sup> I cannot resist the temptation of calling the reader's attention to Chapter IV of this work, where Lev. v. 25-3 is quoted, and to Chapter XI, where the Social Message of Christianity is discussed.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
constituted simply that men may live, but that they may live well. But slaves are no more capable than other animals of enjoying happiness or freedom.

If there exist no rights between master and slave, the former cannot be unjust towards the latter ; and, moreover, the slave is only a part of his master, and no one can be unjust to himself. Finally, the only relationship between master and slave is that of the workman and his tool, of the soul to the body, *and a certain care has to be lavished on a tool, because one wants to make use of it.* But one has no feeling of affection for inanimate objects, like the ox or horse, and the slave, therefore, as slave cannot be an object of affection. At the same time Aristotle adds a rider which upsets this subtle reasoning, for he allows that one may have a sort of affection for the slave as man.

Apply these principles to the uncivilised races, who are by nature slaves, and human nature will be found to be divided into two classes : one, numerically small, the Greeks, who have a right to command, and the other, the majority of humanity, barbarians, who have no right but to obey. Slaves, barbarians, all one according to Aristotle. He refuses them even the simplest rights, and goes so far as to assert that there is no real marriage between them ; only the coupling together of two slaves. It is legitimate to make war upon them—it is merely a kind of chase after those born to serve who have been unwilling to submit. These stubborn slaves are to the Greeks just like so many wild beasts of the forest.†

Aristotle did not insist on reducing all workers to servitude, but, none the less, he considered all manual labourers unworthy of the name of citizens, and, at bottom, nothing but slaves. Socrates, or Aristophanes,

† J. Denis, loc. cit., pp. 223-227.



## PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

might have said that the only thing to which shame is attached is arrogant indolence, that there is nothing more servile or degrading in working for others than in occupying oneself with the affairs of State, and that men of wealth owe their well-being to the industrious poor. But Aristotle's only answer is: "To work for an individual is to be a slave, to work for the public is to be a labourer or unpaid workman"—and his aristocratic idea of citizen excludes both from its benefits.

We are told that the people of Chios were the first to buy and sell slaves, and that when the Delphic oracle heard of this crime, it declared that by so doing they had drawn down the wrath of the gods upon them. Slavery, that thus provoked divine anger, is not so old as liberty, and the latter alone is the natural right of man. Realising this, the Arcadians, in order to keep in remembrance man's primeval freedom, which had been so egregiously and openly violated by the laws, had a custom, on certain solemn occasions, of placing masters and slaves at the same table, of serving them with the same meats, and making them drink out of the same cups. This was an appeal, therefore, against the philosopher's decisions, even during his lifetime.

But what is important to bear in mind is that, in the way in which he posed the question, it was impossible to refute his arguments, if one agreed to slavery for no other reason than that of the right belonging to the strongest. And so the great philosopher, seeking to demonstrate the natural foundation of slavery, shattered the legal and political bases of the institution, which he ruined from top to bottom by digging too deep in his desire to make it secure. Before long, the Stoics were to put forward the claims of humanity; to proclaim the moral equality of Greek and barbarian, of master and slave, and moreover to declare that

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

slavery was an evil and to conceive of a society founded entirely on right and justice, applying generally the Aristotlean axiom : " Works which we look upon as reserved only for the lowest class, do honour to the free youths who choose to undertake them. For the merit or vice of an action is less in the action itself than in the motives which inspired it and the end in view."

We have thus seen that the social doctrines of both the father of Idealism and of his great disciple, the Stagirite, were adverse not only to political but also to social democracy, and that both these Greek philosophers held manual labour in contempt. They both postulated a certain economic equality—i.e. the prevention by the State of extreme wealth on the one side and of extreme poverty on the other—that they sanctified, and philosophically admitted, the principle of slavery.

Professor Barker contends that the slavery which existed in Athens, especially skilled slavery, was not hard. But he adds that slavery, " however charitably we may interpret its character, can never be made for righteousness." <sup>1</sup>

The social ideas of both Plato and Aristotle were based on absolutism and slavery, i.e. principles opposed to those of social democracy, as I have defined it, to social justice and to the gospel of labour, of the dignity of labour and of the rights of labour. Both philosophers overlooked the great truth that man is something more than a link in a chain, that man is created in the image of God, is more than a unit to be sacrificed to the welfare of the community or the State. They also failed to generalise man, and to apply those virtues of justice and friendship which they so highly praised, but limited to the select few, to man in general.

<sup>1</sup> Barker, *loc. cit.*, p. 33.

THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CYNIC  
AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS





## CHAPTER IX

### THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CYNIC AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS

#### THE CYNICS

THE Cynics were the first to give utterance to the protest of the despised classes, of the proletariat, of the *canaille*. As it usually happens, this socially democratic philosophy went to extremes and degenerated into anarchy. After all, E. v. Hartmann might be right when he says, "Die letzte Konsequenz der Demokratie ist die Anarchie."<sup>1</sup>

The Cynics, however, prepared the way for the Stoic philosophy. They attacked the existing artificial institutions, and insisted upon the equality of man!

They have been rightly called the ancient philosophers of the proletariat.<sup>2</sup> They demanded a return to nature, an idea to which Rousseau gave such popularity centuries later.<sup>3</sup> The great merit of the Cynics, from a social point of view, was the fact that they no longer looked backwards for the State where social justice would reign supreme, but forwards to a time when it would and should become a reality. Whether the State of which the Cynics dreamed would really be one where happiness would reign supreme is a point which I will not expatiate upon.

The Cynics demanded a perfect equality of man, which would naturally result in an economic justice,

<sup>1</sup> E. v. Hartmann, *Tagesfragen*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Stein, loc. cit., p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Poehlmann, loc. cit., vol. i, p. 113.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

but they cannot be considered communists in the modern sense of the word, because, instead of an equality of possession, they dreamed of an equality of *non-possession*. They were anxious for an equal distribution not of wealth, but of poverty, whilst modern communists are anxious for a redistribution of wealth in their own interests.

The Epicureans cared little for politics, and even for humanitarianism and ethics in general.<sup>1</sup> The logical consequence of Epicureanism was its indifference to social justice or to the sufferings of the labouring classes and the slaves. "The Epicurean," writes Ingram,<sup>2</sup> "had no scruple about the servitude of those whose labours contributed to his own indulgence and tranquillity; he would at most cultivate an easy temper in his dealings with them."

Whilst the Cynics and Epicureans were criticising existing ideas and were too indifferent, or too selfish, to preach any real idea of social justice or to plead the cause of labour, of the lowly, the poor, and the oppressed, of the slaves and working-men, Stoicism developed the fundamental idea of natural justice.

### THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE STOICS

The foundation and establishment of the world-empire by Alexander the Great had an influence upon the ideas of Greece. The event widened the philosophical, moral, and social horizon of Greek thought. The Greek philosophers had looked upon their nation as the chosen race, who alone had a monopoly of mental aristocracy. Plato and Aristotle had considered all foreigners as barbarians, incapable of any

<sup>1</sup> Guyau, *La Morale d'Épicure*, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Ingram, *History of Slavery*, p. 30.



## CYNIC AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS

higher mental effort, and inaccessible to any cultural, moral, and philosophical ideas ; as a consequence of the Alexandrian world-empire, hosts of barbarians invaded Athens, and the proud Hellenes had to admit that the foreigners were, after all, not all barbarians, and could boast of some mental culture.

The conquests of Alexander changed the moral as well as the political outlook of Hellenism ; for ethically, as well as socially, it became impossible any longer to regard the *polis* as the supreme unit of morality.<sup>1</sup> The conception of the State gradually enlarged to that of the nation, and nationality became cosmopolitan in its field of exercise.

The Stoics proceed in their social philosophy from the desire of self-preservation implanted in man. According to Stoic morality, the height of ignominy is the egotism *la* Stirner.<sup>2</sup> Nature has implanted in us a strong sense of selfishness and of self-preservation, but in order to palliate this tendency, nature has also inculcated us with another desire, that of sociability with our fellow-men. This latter tendency leads us to justice and to love of humanity, which alone will warrant an everlasting and happy social life. Egotism is the motive force of human actions, but not the goal and end in itself. As individuals we are inclined to be selfish and to say "après nous le déluge," which is the acme of extreme individualism,<sup>3</sup> but as reasonable, rational beings we are urged to subordinate selfish to communal interests. "Et unumquemque nostrum ejus mundi esse partem, ex quo illud consequi, ut communem utilitatem nostrae anteponamus," writes Cicero.

<sup>1</sup> S. H. Rendall, *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus to Himself*, p. lxxxv. Macmillan, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Stirner, *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*.

<sup>3</sup> Poehlmann, loc. cit., vol. i, p. 614.

Every man who is possessed of this principle of reason is consequently capable of acting up to it. Every individual must submit to this law of nature and of reason, that is, the subordination of our selfishness to the tendency of sociability and love of humanity. This rational law is defined by Chrysippus as "the queen of all things, divine and human, the arbiter of good and evil, of just and unjust, the sovereign mistress of the doings of all beings created by nature for communal sociability." To live, therefore, as a hermit, as a private individual, is contrary to Stoic conceptions. The duty of the Stoic is to live in human society. Such a morality naturally extended beyond the national boundaries. It preached justice and equality. Plato and Aristotle had placed justice as the aim and goal of the State. The fundamental idea of the Stoics is also justice, but in addition to it they require *love of humanity*. Plato and Aristotle limit their justice to a small circle, whilst the Stoics are cosmopolitan in their conceptions. The Stoa preached a world-citizenship, and its characteristic feature was universalism. The abstract idea of justice discussed by Plato and Aristotle entered with the Stoics into the domain of reality.

The philosophy of the Stoics resembles the French philosophy of the eighteenth century, by its breadth, its generosity, its liberalism. "Humanity," writes Janet,<sup>1</sup> "had evidently become rife for ideas of love and charity." But Janet evidently forgets that the universalism of the Stoics was postulated religiously by the prophets and afterwards by Christianity.

Thus Stoicism stands for unity of the human species, equality of man, equality of man and

<sup>1</sup> Janet, loc. cit., vol. i, p. 250.

## CYNIC AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS

woman, benevolence, purity, charity, and tolerance.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental idea of the social philosophy of the Stoics is sociability. The longing for sociability is innate not only in nature, but in man.

Though the wise man may suffice to himself, he cannot learn how to live and develop his nature except among his fellow-men. One must know in what society a man moves, to judge of what he can do and ought to be.

It is not the desire for union that constitutes society, though it may be a helping factor: society is based essentially on law and justice; and what is law? It is described as the arbiter of good and evil. It commands that which ought to be done and forbids the contrary.<sup>2</sup> "This feeling of law animates and governs inanimate nature, and communicates itself to intelligent beings, human and divine; but ultimately it resides in Jupiter alone, and is guided by it in the governance of the world."<sup>3</sup> Jupiter himself is the law of justice, he is the only and one law, and only the illiterate look upon law as emanating from the ordinances of Lycurgus, Solon, or Clisthenes. These are spurious laws promulgated by man.

The Stoics assert that all men possess reason, and therefore all men are capable of law, and of the one sole law in which all intelligent beings participate—and this law is necessarily good, just and supreme, for it is the very reason of God.

If law is only right reason, it can only exist for reasonable beings, therefore there can be no natural rights as between man and beasts. But these exist between human beings, and none can violate them without committing a crime and sinning against

<sup>1</sup> Denis, loc. cit., p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>3</sup> Chrysippus.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

nature, since all participate in reason, and this participation, this reasonable relationship, so to speak, is the basis of justice of the social communion. Again, the same rights unite men and gods, since they have an origin and nature in common. A community of rights constitutes a state, and therefore there is only one state, as there exists but one universal law. It is the world, and republic of men and gods. "There are no separate states distinguished by nature," says Ariston, "any more than there are naturally houses, inheritances, or locksmiths or surgeons."

The Stoics did not look upon magistrates as such who only owed their titles to chance or mob-suffrage. The sole legislator, the sole magistrate, the sole judge, the sole legitimate sovereign is the sage (philosopher). Hence the paradox that the sage alone is free and a citizen, whilst the ignorants are merely aliens and strangers and slaves. There is a profound sense in these strange words. Those who violate the law of their great native country become, by so doing, aliens to it, but he who obeys Jupiter cannot be banished from the world, from universal reason. He will still be free though bound in irons, since the supreme liberty resides in obeying the dictates of reason. But whether noble, magistrate, or king, he who, evading the law of truth, is under the tyranny of the body and its passions, is the lowest of slaves, to whatever city he may belong.

This is the highest morality. Herewith the Stoics, for the first time, proclaim the natural equality of mankind, the fraternity which unites us in one family, and the divine dignity of our nature. It may be permitted to Plutarch to turn into ridicule this universal city "where the stars are magistrates, and the sun the consul."

## CYNIC AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS

We who live in this twentieth century trouble ourselves but little about this singular theogony, but we find in its description a lofty philosophic thought, the idea of the fellowship of spirits, of where God is the Father and Lord. And when we see that the Stoics admitted slaves, so despised by the ancients, into this high city, we willingly forget their antiphysical imaginations and salute the first emergence of justice and humanity.

And Stoicism not only set forth the equality among all men, but from it drew immediate inference that slavery as an institution was wrong. It meant, in every case, the right of the master, and this right is bad. It was, according to nature, a horrible thing that one man should be the property of another. We must admire Zeno for his courage, for it is not rare to find men who loudly proclaim the *moral equality of all men in God's sight*, and yet hesitate to affirm this *equality in natural and civil matters here below*. Justice is deferred to the next world, as he has not the hardihood to claim it and stand up for it in this.

Do we wish to know what our duties are towards our fellow-citizens? Consider what relation we bear to one another. For if the city is the common mother, and represents both father and mother, there can be no question but that a certain fraternity binds the citizens together. We ought, therefore, to behave to our fellow-citizens as we would to brothers. It is not enough to instruct and preach to them, we must see that they do not lack the necessities of life. And there are certain like duties owing to the strangers, who come to us under God's protection, for it is He who has established hospitality. And we must quit ourselves of our duties not only for the sake of God, who is the guardian of all, but to augment our own

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

humanity, which should take count not only of the ties that bind us to those of our own blood and parentage, but of those which bind us to the whole human race.

Now, taking note of the eternal separation established by the Stoics between the philosopher and the fool, one might be led to suppose that this community could only exist between wise men. The Stoics state that fools are only bound together by outward and fortuitous circumstance, and are incapable of friendship and fidelity. But, although there is discord and feud between them, it does not follow that they are actually enemies, or that philosophers should hate them and treat them as strangers.

Both nature and reason bid man be friends with man, in order to cultivate loving-kindness and philanthropy, and strive to render service to as many as possible of his fellow-men, to any and all alike. If he is an ordinary individual, he will be ready to help with money, influence, and counsel; if he is a politician or statesman, he will pass laws and introduce peace and harmony into the State. If he holds a position of power, he will, like Hercules and Bacchus, aspire to work for the protection and salvation of mankind.

The function of the philosopher, as also his happiness, consists in devoting himself to the welfare of humanity. For if one does injury to oneself in injuring others, one draws an equal benefit in benefiting others.

The Stoic sage owes to others, not only justice, but good will and love. True sociability consists, indeed, in the mingling of justice and goodness. "I will teach you," says Hecaton, "of a philtre which requires no incantation, no drug, or charm."

This moral teaching at first sight appears hard, inflexible, haughty, proud, not to say intolerant.



## CYNIC AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS

When one reads of philosophers and fools, and no place left for any intermediate class ; when one is told that only the philosopher is free, rich and regal, that he can never err nor commit a trespass, that he is released from all passion, is without pity, and stands on a level with the gods—all this, taken literally, fills one with a sense of strange and foolish paradox, and leaves an impression of insensibility and pride. But this is not the real essence of Stoicism, of which the basis is the spiritualising of ethics : it means duty and inward freedom ; the equality of all men and philanthropy : resignation, piety, and submission to fate and to those who oppress us.<sup>1</sup>

Neither Plato nor Aristotle conceive a republic that is not confined within certain limits. A convenient place must be chosen for it, and the imaginary State must only contain ten thousand citizens, as at Sparta. These are divided into classes, to each is assigned its proper function, those who fill the higher posts being taught and drilled accordingly. And what minute regulations ! What drillings ! No philosopher has taken such pains as Plato to build up sound, strong bodies. Zeno's politics are much simpler, for it is men, not warriors, that he wishes to create, and, further, he finds it sufficient to teach them how to lead ordinary lives, to whatever condition they belong, by resisting pleasure, surmounting trouble, avoiding the angry passions that divide us, and helping and supporting the one or the other as children of the same God, each striving as he is able to imitate and worship this universal Father of nature and souls. What need is there for men to waste time in exercising their bodies and learning to handle weapons ? Men are soldiers only for temporary and chance occasions.

<sup>1</sup> Denis, *loc. cit.*, vol. i, p. 343.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

What need have they to enclose their country with walls of lesser or greater circuit? All that is covered by the vault of heaven is their country. And in this country every man finds his own place. *There are no longer nobles and commoners, masters or slaves.*<sup>1</sup>

"We are not distinguished from one another by birth," says Menander. "Justice declares that every good man is well born . . . whosoever is inclined to goodness by nature is noble, even if a stranger or barbarian." It follows that in virtue alone consists distinction, and that no man is a stranger to another as long as he is a virtuous man, for we have all the same nature, and in virtue lies our true affinity. "And then the slave—what misery," explains Menander, "to conform wholly to the will of the master, to lose all personality in another being!" And so he exhorts the slave to serve as a free man of free heart, and he ceases to be a slave. And to the master he says: "If you make your serving-man entirely your slave, he will be bad; you will make him a better man by giving him liberty of speech." Philemon reminds the master that a man, though a slave, does not cease to be a man: "he is of the same flesh and blood as yourself"—Nature never makes slaves. Mutual tolerance—that is to be the bond between human beings. It is not enough, however, to tolerate; we must examine our own faults and weaknesses. "To live is not to live for oneself alone." Let us all help one another, and there will be no need to wait on fortune. Have compassion on the troubles of others, and others may compassionate us: "Show hospitality to the stranger; you may be a stranger yourself some day." If rich, remember the poor, who are the children of God; and remember that they work and suffer that others may

<sup>1</sup> See Adler, loc. cit., p. 48; and Poehlmann, loc. cit.



## CYNIC AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS

enjoy the fruits of their labours. If we give proudly and condescendingly to the poor, we steep attic honey in absinthe ; if we cover his nakedness, we render him doubly naked by insulting him.<sup>1</sup>

But, although the Stoics preached a philosophy of humanity and justice, they were still steeped in the idea of the aristocracy of mind. Whilst Aristotle considered the rule of the aristocracy of mind as the *happiest*, Plato, Pythagoras, and even the Stoics, considered it as the most *reasonable*. The sage of the Stoics is the only free man, whilst all others are slaves.<sup>2</sup> The Stoics recognise no aristocracy of birth, but an aristocracy of mind. Cleanthes maintained that the majority of mankind is distinguished from the brutes only by its body, and that the judgment of the majority is of no consequence. "The aristocratic pride of the Stoic sage," says Stein,<sup>3</sup> "rightly reminds us of Nietzsche's *Ueberschensch*." Even Zeno maintained that "only the good are friends and relations among themselves ; the evil ones are hostile and strangers to each other."

With regard to sociability, the Stoics taught that the desire after unity and sociability is innate not only in nature, but also in man. Humanity's mission is therefore to unite into one great, universal, cosmopolitan state. The fundamental idea of Zeno, according to Plutarch, is that humanity—without any difference of state, religion, race, or law—is destined to form a harmonious great State ; the whole world being considered as one city. In a word, the Stoic idea is cosmopolitanism and universalism carried to their logical conclusion. From the beginning, therefore, the Stoa ought to have vehemently preached a gospel

<sup>1</sup> Denis, loc. cit., p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> Bernays, *Herakl. Briefe*, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Stein, loc. cit., p. 225.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
of equality and of justice, the absolute abolition of slavery, and the real equality of men. Unfortunately, nothing of the kind happened,<sup>1</sup> at least not until the later Stoics.<sup>2</sup>

"Stoicism," writes Stein,<sup>3</sup> "suffered from that sociological contradiction which even our own age has not succeeded in overcoming." In conformity with its cosmopolitan, universal ideal, the Stoa, it is true, promulgated the doctrine that all should consider themselves as citizens of one state, and, abolishing the dividing and distinguishing laws and constitutions, live as one herd under the one law of reason.<sup>4</sup>

From the sense of justice of the Stoics, their postulate of the laws of nature, their idea that there is a freedom of man which no law, no outside power can destroy, it logically followed that legal slavery was an outrage and a violation of the law of nature. If we must love man because he is man,<sup>5</sup> if all men are related; and as nature is their common mother, that is the Divine reason, then to commit an injustice against man is an act of impiety.<sup>6</sup>

Had the Stoic philosophy been really faithful unto itself, it ought to have preached a gospel not only against slavery, but, like the prophets and later the sages of the Talmud, of the dignity of labour—and the idea of social democracy.

Instead, there is certainly a political democracy in the State of Zeno, but the Stoa contradicts its own ideas of equality, and consequently of social democracy,

<sup>1</sup> Zeno criticised slavery, but oh! how feebly (*Diog. Laert.*, vii. 1, 122). But after all it must not be forgotten that Zeno was a Greek, and mentally related to Cynicism, which ignored social claims.

<sup>2</sup> Melamed, in his *Staat*, p. 65, is perhaps too sharp in his criticism of the Stoa, but substantially right.

<sup>3</sup> Stein, loc. cit., p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> Zeller, iv. 302.

<sup>5</sup> Cicero, "ob eam ipsam causam quod homo est," *De Officiis*, iii, vi.

<sup>6</sup> "Totum hoc, quo continemur, unum est et Deus; et socii sumus ejus et membra" (*Marc. Ant.*, i, ix. 1).

## CYNIC AND STOIC PHILOSOPHERS

when it gives vent to its individualistic inclinations and aristo-philosophical pride. Here universalism and social democracy, on the one side, and individualism and aristocracy on the other, are contradicting each other.

This contradiction was perceived by the Roman Stoic philosophers, and what I have termed a social democracy (if not a political), or the real equality of man, was preached at Rome. Roman poetry and Roman social philosophy fell under the sway of Stoicism, which extended its reign over the Imperium Romanum and ruled supreme in schools and senate, and even on the throne. It is here that took place a gradual conciliation of the contradictory and opposing elements of which Stoicism was composed, namely, individualism and universalism, law of nature and aristocratic pride.





LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME



## CHAPTER X

### LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

ROME was founded by a handful of adventurers who hated work and despised labour, and preferred amusement and recreation to honest toil. The Roman State afterwards arose by conquest.<sup>1</sup> Greece, both Athens and Sparta, were never ambitious. They never dreamed of a world-empire. Imperialism was foreign to the Greek mind. The Greeks were too exclusive, too proud to mix with barbarians even to extend their sway over them. If the Greeks held work and toilers in contempt, if they postulated leisure for the citizen, it was with a view to enabling him to devote his time to the occupations of the mind. The man, however, who is anxious to be economically independent, so as to be able to follow his favourite pursuits, is not so greedy as the capitalist who grasps and exploits for the sole pleasure of possessing. Plutocracy, therefore, became much more powerful in Rome than it had ever been in Greece, and the misery of the Roman proletariat, at the moment when Christianity made its appearance, was much more terrible than that of the Greek proletariat. The Greeks despised labour, and all their philosophers expressed themselves to this effect, but they only despised manual labour, giving preference to intellectual work. Rome, on the contrary, despised both manual and intellectual work, leaving everything to

<sup>1</sup> W. Ihne, *Researches into the History of the Roman Constitution*, 1853, p. 32.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

slaves. Epictetus was a slave, and Terentius a freedman. The Roman working-men were considered even inferior to the beggars and to the parasites. The more the power of capitalism increased, the more it became an axiom to look upon the landed proprietors as the only real citizens, the more labour, industry, and work were despised.

Rome owed her greatness, her world-empire to conquest, and from the very beginning of her existence her spirit was aristocratic. Rome, in spite of all appearances, never was a democracy; not even a political democracy. The rule of an aristocracy, although advantageous for the durability of the State, is fatal to liberty and to equality.<sup>1</sup> The aristocratic conqueror, the famous "blonde beast" of Nietzsche, looks upon the conquered as his slaves, as to him alone they owe life, and, if he is generous, freedom. The history of Rome is divided into three periods: Monarchy, Republic, and Empire. All through these periods there runs the same spirit: Rule of aristocracy or of plutocracy. The early kings of Rome were the tools of the patricians. The constitution of Servius Tullius gave the rich the power to dominate the *comitia*, to occupy all important posts—and to fill the seats of the Senate. The plebeians were constantly their debtors. These debts did not arise, as Niebuhr once suggested, out of direct loans, but from yearly ground-rents, which plebeians paid to the patricians.<sup>2</sup>

The ruling population had come into possession of territory by conquest, and it laid claim to the property of the land. The expulsion of the kings and the establishment of the Republic altered but little this initial principle. It only meant that a new

<sup>1</sup> F. Laurent, *Histoire de l'Humanité*, vol. iii, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ihne, loc. cit., p. 112.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

aristocracy and ruling class had taken the place of the old one.

The fight between patricians and plebeians became inevitable. It broke out soon after the expulsion of the kings. The only source of revenue of the early Romans was agriculture, and the ruined small farmers were compelled to pay exorbitant ground-rent to their lords the patricians.

The twelve Tables confirmed the hard lot of the plebeians and of the proletarians. Livius calls it "*Lex horrendi carminis.*"<sup>1</sup> He also admits that the houses of the nobles were prisons full of the plebeian debtors, and that the poor debtors were adjudged and led from the forum like cattle.<sup>2</sup> Rome was not a common Fatherland for the Romans, but it presented the spectacle of two cities, one the abode of poverty and of the proletarians, the other the seat of opulence and of domination.<sup>3</sup> Driven to excess, the plebeians decided to abandon the city where they found no home, and consequently, on the Sacred Mount, the patricians made concessions. But the transaction was of little advantage to the plebeians. The patricians continued to exploit their poorer fellow-citizens, and the people continued to suffer. The patrician prisons still served as the habitual dwelling-places of the plebeians,<sup>4</sup> for laws were made by the patricians, at once creditors and judges. These laws were the laws of the masters, just as all Roman law is the law of masters, and Rome's morality is the morality of the masters. The people now demanded written laws, and the decemvirate was entrusted with the work. The laws were written down, but they were favourable

<sup>1</sup> *Livius, Hist. Rom.*, vol. i, 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, iii, 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vi, 36.

<sup>4</sup> *Livius, ibid.*, iii, 57.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

to the patricians. The plebeians continued to fight, and after a struggle which extended over several centuries obtained equal political rights.

But the whole fight between the patricians and the plebeians in Rome, had, as a matter of fact, been waged between the patricians and the wealthier plebeians. And, indeed, only the latter derived any benefit from the victory obtained. Only the wealthy plebeians were admitted to high State dignities. They, the leaders, gained the ear of the poor and of the proletarians by promising them economical amelioration.<sup>1</sup>

For five centuries the Roman Senate had opposed the claims of the *plebs*, and when, at last, the latter had triumphed, it was faced by a new ruling class, the *nobilitas*, and a powerful plutocracy which formed a separate caste, inaccessible to the remaining citizens, and exploiting the proletariat.

Thus, when, at last, the *plebs* had obtained complete political equality, it found it to be an empty word. Privilege was based not upon birth, but upon a status which apparently was one obtainable by every individual, namely, wealth, but which, in reality, was a bar to the mass of the people. The Roman *plebs* triumphed in its fight for political equality, but it failed in its fight for social equality. It had expelled the kings, and for centuries had concentrated its energies upon a struggle for emancipation. Led by its tribunes, its labour leaders, it fought valiantly for the title of *Civis Romanus*. The *plebs Romana* was victorious in the end, but it soon convinced itself that political equality is a useless acquisition, if one is economically dependent, out of work, or a pauper. Then the *plebs Romana* tried to make use of its political liberty for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. C. Bücher, *Die Aufstände der unfreien Arbeiter*, p. 7.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

the purpose of obtaining social and economic justice through its tribunes, its leaders and representatives. But here the *plebs* met with the opposition not only of the old patricians, but also of the plebeian *nouveaux riches*.

Economic laws were voted, but never observed. Instead of allowing the people to become economically independent, to earn honestly their bread in the sweat of their brow, the patricians and *nouveaux riches* of Rome who held work and workers in contempt, tried to humiliate and degrade the proletarians by offering them charity and the dole. They introduced a system which may rightly be called "Poplarism." Capitalism, not out of generosity, but out of pride, endeavoured to break the spirit of the enemy by reducing him to the humiliating position of a beggar receiving alms. The *plebs Romana*, the Roman proletariat, ultimately lost its fight, its pride was broken, and, forced by hunger and misery, it accepted crumbs from Cæsar, into whose arms it had thrown itself.

The people were so demoralised that they accepted the *panes* distributed by Cæsar, and only clamoured for *circenses* in addition.

Roman greatness and civilisation (it has been admitted by all historians) was based upon slavery. But it was not only slavery which constituted Rome's crime, it was her contempt for and exploitation of labour. The result of her master morality was a vast proletariat, rural and urban—the antagonism of plutocracy and of pauperism which brought about her downfall.

The formation of vast domains, and the accumulation of big fortunes in the hands of a few, resulted in a numerous proletariat, in the country as well as in the town. Small rival proprietors became rare,

absorbed as they had been by large property-owners—but many of them became small farmers. Usually the large rural domains were divided into two parts, one cultivated by slaves, in chains and otherwise, under a *villicus*, the other let out to small free farmers.<sup>1</sup> From a third type of cultivation issued the *colonat*. The *colonus* was a cultivator attached to the glebe-land, who could not be sold without the land, was forced to pay certain fixed dues, but enjoyed freedom of person. There were various ways of recruiting a *colonat*—it was one of the means by which the rich absorbed the possessions of the poor. Often the *colonus* was a slave to whom the proprietor, in return for certain dues, had conceded a small piece of land for cultivation. Thus it was possible to be at the same time a *colonus* and a slave. Varro was of the opinion that industrious slaves should be given a piece of land and a small flock: “It will really make them the more attached to the domain.”<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the small free farmers, living from father to son on the bit of land let to them, reached little by little to the conditions of serfs. Free men out of work and very small proprietors were reduced to asking, as a favour, to become *coloni* on some domain. To these two types of *coloni* may be added the imported population and immigrants. Diocletian transported whole populations from Asia to Thrace and gave them land there.<sup>3</sup>

Time equalised these various types of *coloni*. The Roman *colonus* had the right to go to law even against his proprietor. The judge he appealed to was to oppose any increase in dues, and even to enforce the restitution to him of what had been unjustly exacted.

<sup>1</sup> Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières*, vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Varro, *De Re rustica*.

<sup>3</sup> Levasseur, loc. cit. See also Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité Antique*, Paris, 1864.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

A *colonus* could be a proprietor, also be enrolled in the army ; he could contract a real marriage, and no one had the right to separate him from his wife and children. He could sometimes be called upon to do odd jobs, in which case he owed the proprietor a given number of working-days per year. The proprietor was not allowed to sell the domain without the *colonus*, the new tenant, on his side, could not bring in new *coloni*. The sons of *coloni* succeeded their father and were obliged to marry on the domain, unless they could buy a dispensation. They could not be punished by the master except for certain offences previously specified. To sum up, they were not a possession, slaves, but simply proletarians attached to the soil.

It was from among the *coloni* that the proprietors, themselves exempt from military service, recruited the number of conscripts which they had to provide for the army, and this number was in proportion to the extent of the domain. The origin of the urban proletariat was analogous to that of the rural. The two chief sources were the dispossession of the landowners and the liberation of the slaves. The proletariat consisted of the mass of poor citizens, whose only service to the State was the procreation of children. They were also known as *capite censi*, numbered by head, as they could not be by possessions. Very early in Roman history, the proletariat formed the immense majority of the Roman people. Under Cæsar, out of a population of 450,000 in Rome, 320,000 belonged to the proletariat.<sup>1</sup>

They were practically exempt from military service, for they could not possibly meet the cost of the militia, but, on the other hand, all among them who were

<sup>1</sup> Wallon, *Histoire de l'Esclavage*, vol. iii, p. 146.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Roman citizens could not be compelled to follow a manual trade. The State was, therefore, obliged to support these idle by right, who spent their lives lazing about, dabbling in politics and—*tout comme chez nous*—frequently sold their vote.

The Treasury was exhausted owing to having to feed, by periodical distributions, this inactive crowd, whom Cicero named "the leech of the Public Treasury" (*concionalis hirudo aerarii*).<sup>1</sup> Under the Republic, only corn was distributed, but the Emperors went further, adding oil and replacing the corn by bread and fat.\* Aurelian arranged for wine to be sold to them below market price, but under Constantine it was distributed gratuitously.

For, in the opinion of Rome as in that of Greece, manual labour was slave's work.<sup>3</sup> In fact, as regarded the rich, or even people in easy circumstances, the work done in their houses by the slaves sufficed for all need. Each family with comfortable means had its corn-mill, its oven, its weaving-looms, its tools, its slaves who made the bread, the wearing apparel. The domain provided the necessary food. Augustus himself made a point of wearing only those clothes which had been woven or made in his home. This "family system," therefore, differed entirely from ours. Industrial production was never in excess, as it was limited to the needs of the family, and the rich never had to pay the wages of the poor.<sup>4</sup>

The contempt both for agriculture and manual labour was so great in Rome, so deeply rooted, that Greeks in the time of Augustus maintained that

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *Ad Attic.*, i, 16, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Wallon, *loc. cit.*, vol. iii, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Drumann, *Die Arbeiter und Kommunisten*, p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> Levasseur, *loc. cit.*

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

Romulus had already excluded the working-men from participating in the foundation of his State.<sup>1</sup>

Industry, however, and labour had to struggle against other obstacles than that of contempt. During the first centuries of the Republic, Rome was always under arms—the enemy was practically at her gates, and often work had to be left to go and push back the bands of pillagers who set fire to farms and cut down the harvests. Suddenly they would hear that the Veians or the Samnites had passed the Tiber, and hurriedly they would arm, each workman would take up his post on the ramparts, all work ceased in the Forum and the shops were closed.

These sudden interruptions, these constantly-renewed alarms created sterility in industry. The artisan lived in his shop, poor and looked down upon, without any hope of rising from his humble condition. Thus the ancient artisan colleges, whose foundation is attributed to Numa, and which for long were the only ones recognised by the Republic, were in small numbers, and but for the flute-players and goldsmiths represented only a few of the coarser arts of a nation devoid of industry—that is, carpenters, dyers, shoemakers, ironfounders, and pottery-makers. If no bakers or butchers and trades were represented, it was that each family lived on its own produce and that the Roman matron baked her own bread. All artisans who did not belong to the privileged sections were relegated to the lowest class, the proletariat class.<sup>2</sup>

In Rome they had no political influence outside that city, entrance into the camps was forbidden them, and the Republic admitted them into the army only when some unusual danger forced them to call up all citizens

<sup>1</sup> See Dionysos, *Hal. A. R.*, ix, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Levasseur, loc. cit.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY without exception. Comic poets ridiculed them mercilessly in their licentious plays, and more than once Plautus held up to the laughter of theatre audiences the little shopkeepers of Rome, especially in the Tuscan faubourg.<sup>1</sup>

These profitless humiliations prevented nearly all citizens from becoming tradespeople, the shops were kept almost entirely by freedmen, or by strangers attracted to Rome by either misery, the fate of war, or sometimes the promises of the Senate. Africa and Greece enriched the State and its citizens, and peopled the town with a numerous crowd of slaves of all kinds. The naval victories gave birth to maritime commerce, and the consular nobles made fortunes either by plundering the provinces or by this new commerce, the immense profits accruing from which they did not disdain.<sup>2</sup>

Rome became the richest town in the world, but its riches in no way helped the workmen who had to struggle against the redoubtable competition of the slaves. Regulus had but one servant to help him cultivate the ground, and most of the patricians of his day lived in a similarly simple way. But 150 years after four hundred slaves appeared armed from the house of a simple Roman knight, and Athenion, one of the leaders of the revolt, was himself but an overseer charged with the direction of two hundred slaves. Many citizens had still larger *families* : that of Pedamus Secundus consisted of four hundred people, who were all put to death for not revealing the name of their master's murderer.<sup>3</sup> Crassus had more than five hundred workmen busy with one type of work.<sup>4</sup> Pliny tells us that a certain Cœciluis Claudius, who had lost

<sup>1</sup> Plautus, *Curculio*, vol. iv, 1, 490.

<sup>2</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*, ii, xlii.

<sup>3</sup> *Tacit annal*, vol. xiv, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch, *Crassus*, 2.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

heavily during the civil wars, at his death left, amongst other treasures, 4,016 slaves. Though the total number of slave population was often exaggerated, it is certain it became very considerable. The slave wars alone suffice to prove this. This multitude of men were not all engaged in the personal service of their masters, or given to the barbarous pleasures of the populace in "the circus." The greater number formed a working-class whose proprietors exploited their work, sold their produce, and even hired out their services—slaves had two advantages over free workmen, which caused them to be preferred; they were more obedient, because they could be taught, punished and, till the reign of the Antonines, put to death as one liked. Also their work was less expensive, as they were the property of the master who only gave them their food. The possession of a family of slaves thus became a very productive capital; a rich citizen wishing to invest his money bought slaves as one might buy cattle, horses, or land; and but for a few high-class domestics whose price fashion exaggerated, thanks to the war, slaves could be purchased for very little expense. There were two kinds of working slaves—one kind worked in the house of the master and for the master: they were the cooks, carvers, spinners,<sup>1</sup> bakers, goldsmiths and shoemakers; the workers in wool, weavers, and dressmakers. Everyone composed his household according to his needs or tastes. Crassus, who wanted to construct and build, had masons, architects; women had nurses; a man of letters had copyists, makers, and polishers of parchment. A rich man knew how to use the various talents of his slaves for all the necessities of life or the caprices of centurions' taste. He employed in his

<sup>1</sup> Wallon, *Histoire de l'Esclavage*, vol. ii, p. 3.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

personal service all trades from that of shoemaker to that of perfumer, from the porter chained to his lodge to the philosopher whose lessons in ethics entertained the guests at his feasts.

The other type worked for the public for their master's profit, and thus became trade-owners. The slaves became innkeepers selling the wines grown on the farm, dealers in cattle or horses, wandering hawkers, shop assistants, or even writers, miners, goldsmiths, butlers, like those of Crassus, who got more profit from their work, says Plutarch, than from all his land.<sup>1</sup>

Tiberius Gracchus, when crossing the Plain of Etruria, groaned to see vast grazing-lands taking the place of small cultivated fields, and slaves (labourers and shepherds) replacing free men almost everywhere. At the same period an almost similar change in the constitution of labour was taking place in Rome. The invasion of the servile population did harm to artisans and free merchants at the very moment when the development of commerce and luxury seemed about to benefit them. If they did not disappear entirely, it was owing to the fact that, from all parts of Italy, and even of the Empire, there continually poured into Rome all those driven from their native land by misery and those who hoped to ameliorate their condition by work and public charities in that big city. But slavery was a formidable competitor. It took from them their rich clients who could get all they needed from their own slaves, and it disputed, with advantage to itself, their business with other clients owing to the low wages the slaves demanded. Slavery ever prevented the artisan classes from becoming prosperous and, by forcing them to mix with degraded men, it lowered them.

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *Crassus*, 2.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

The result was the increase of an enormous proletariat, determined by various circumstances, such as the dispossession of the small landowners; and as the need of luxury increased and grew rapidly, a great many of the poor, who had no civic rights and no share in public distributions of corn and oil, were compelled to become merchants and working-men.

Musicians, jewellers, metal-workers became a necessity. Studios and shops were opened. But the patricians and the wealthy Romans continued to profess a lowly disdain for this little world of merchants and hard workers: "What honourable thing can come out of a shop?" said Cicero, "and how can it produce anything honest? All workmen of whatever trade are abject—all that comes under the name of "shop" is unworthy the name of an honest man. Carried on on a large scale, and for the provisioning of the country, commerce is, at the most, a tolerable occupation; on a small scale, it can be but sordid traffic, as small tradespeople can only earn by lying, and what can be more shameful than lying?" Therefore all those who sell their work and their trouble must be considered as vile and low, for whoever gives his work for money sells himself and puts himself on a level with slaves. Let us hear Cicero's definition of trade, and his idea of a gentleman:

"As for trades and the ways of getting money, which of them are creditable and which otherwise, I have only these few things to observe: first, all those are unworthy ways of gaining which procure one a general hatred and ill-will; as that of the usurers and tax-gatherers, for instance; secondly, those arts are mean



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

and ungenteeled in which a man is paid for his work, not his skill for the very receiving a reward for one's labour is like taking of earnest to bind himself a slave. Nor are they to be esteemed as better than mean and ordinary people, that buy things up by wholesale of the merchants to retail them out again by little and little ; for what they gain is but a very poor business, unless they are guilty of abominable lying, than which there is nothing in the world more scandalous. Again, all handicraftsmen have but a mean sort of calling ; and it is impossible that a workhouse should have anything that is genteel in it. Further yet, all those trades are pitiful and low that purvey and cater for the satisfying men's pleasures ; fishmongers, butchers, cooks, etc., as Terence reckons them up ; to which we may add, if you please, perfumers, dancing-masters, and those who supply us with dice or cards. But arts that have something of knowledge and skill in them, or those that are useful and necessary for the public, such as physic, for instance, or architecture, or the instruction and education of youth in good manners—these are very creditable and commendable in those whose rank and condition are suited for such employments. As for merchandise, it is sordid and mean, when the trade that is driven is little and inconsiderable, but when it takes in a great quantity of business, and, bringing home goods from every country, sells them out again without lying or deceiving, we can hardly say but that it is creditable enough : nay, it is most certainly very commendable, when those who are concerned in it only design (after they are sated, or rather contented with what they have gained) to betake themselves wholly from the haven to the country, as before they had done from the sea to the haven, and there enjoy quietly their private posses-

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

sions. But among all the methods of enriching oneself, there is no one better, no one more profitable, and pleasant, and agreeable, no more worthy of a man and a gentleman, than that of manuring and tilling the ground ; concerning which I have spoken at large in my *Cato Major*, whence you may borrow what is necessary to be said on this subject.”<sup>1</sup>

As for the freed slaves, they formed a considerable part of the working population, and a freedman always retains far too much of the character of a slave. The serf class continued to compete alarmingly with free labour, and because of this it became necessary for the artisans to form associations, the more so that the big capitalists did not fail to exploit the collective work of their slaves.<sup>2</sup>

Under the Empire labour seemed to have become more honoured.<sup>3</sup> But it would be a mistake to attribute this change to any humanitarian ideas or new conception of the dignity of labour. The prince in whom was vested all power needed, above everything else, to be served, and, with this aim, he unscrupulously requisitioned, from private studios, the men necessary to fill the gaps in the imperial corporations. Above all, the Empire, personified by the Emperor, needed money. War and conquest had ceased to fill the public coffers ; there remained no pecuniary resources except the taxes on property and work. Therefore work had to be enforced and the Treasury thus kept its hand on the taxpayers, on the artisans as well as on the proprietors. The Treasury was the key institution of the Empire, that on which depended all others.

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*, i, xlii.

<sup>2</sup> Moreau Christophe, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Moreau Christophe, loc. cit., pp. 264-8.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Looked down upon by everyone, the working-man of Rome became a sort of enemy of society, which refused to give him a place. The colleges of artisans constituted the revolutionary element. They had joined in all the disorders of the last days of the Republic. Whether because these colleges were sometimes political associations in disguise, or whether, rather, that the crowd which composed them was ever ready to support turbulent tribunes by their votes and with their fists, the Senate very justly held them in suspicion. It was from among them that Marius recruited his most devoted partisans.<sup>1</sup> From that period on to that of the Antonines, artisan guilds were never heard of in history, except in connection with political disturbances, and were frequently proscribed by the Senate and Emperors. When Catilina left Rome, and when his chief accomplices were arrested, an emissary from Lentullus went through the populous quarters, distributing money in the shops and inciting the workmen to revolt against the Consul: there was even a riot in front of the houses where the guilty men were detained, and the effort made by Cicero to reassure the Senators is sufficient proof that their fears were well grounded. "It is true," he said, "that there has been an attempt, but not one artisan could be found poor or perverted enough not to wish to keep his shelter, his modest bed, and his poor little shop where he earns his daily wage; in one word, to go on living peacefully and as usual. Besides, the greater part of those who live in shops, nay, more, all the people of that class, prefer to live in peace. Their industry and work, their profits can only be assured by the affluence of the citizens, can only be secured by peace. To have their shops shut is

<sup>1</sup> Sallust, *Jug.*, 72, 73.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

to lose them: what would it mean were they to be burned?"<sup>1</sup>

Thus labour was always despised and held in contempt in Rome from the very beginning. Humble and weak, the working-man was crushed under the iron heel of the exploiting classes. Neither under the Monarchy, nor under the so-called democracy of the Republic, nor under the much-celebrated *pax Romana* of the Empire, did labour enjoy any right or privilege. The Roman system was the enemy of labour, because Rome's system was based on conquest and exploitation. It was a vast organisation of capitalists, living on the work of slaves and working-men, but despising the toilers.

The question now arises: Were there no attempts made in Rome to emancipate the suffering masses, the toilers, the workers, and the proletariat in general? Was there no balm in Rome, no physician on the banks of the Tiber? Did labour raise its voice and did the proletariat claim its rights? From the brief sketch given above it is evident that a social question always existed in Rome, and that social unrest made itself felt continually throughout Roman history. When large masses of people are exploited by their more fortunate and unscrupulous fellow-men, the cry for social justice is usually uttered by men inspired by an ideal of humanity.

It cannot be said, however, that many such voices resounded in the Roman Empire, although there were some. The Stoa had penetrated into Rome, and many prominent Romans were Stoics. But beyond preaching a doctrine of general humanitarianism<sup>2</sup> the Roman did

<sup>1</sup> Levasseur, loc. cit., vol. i.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the word "humanity" was unknown to the Romans, *humanitas* meaning "politeness." The Roman doctrine of social justice may be summed up in the one sentence: "Homo homini ignoto lupus, est" (Plautus, *asin*).

nothing either for his slaves, the working-men, or the proletariat.

Even Cicero, who enumerates among the duties of a Governor that of furnishing the people with necessities, considers it as his *first* duty to protect private property, and to prevent at all costs a new distribution of estates.

“But the principal thing,” writes Cicero<sup>1</sup> “for a governor to take care of is, that each individual be secured in the quiet enjoyment of his own, and that private men be not dispossessed of what they have, *under a pretence of serving and taking care of the public* ; for nothing is more destructive to the peace of any nation than to bring in a new distribution of estates, which was attempted by Philip in the time of his tribuneship ; however, he quickly gave over his design, and did not persist stubbornly in defence of it, as soon as he found it was so vigorously opposed ; but in his public speeches and harangues to the people, among a great many things to obtain their favour, he was heard to say one of very dangerous consequence : that the whole city had not two thousand men in it that were masters of estates ; a very pernicious and desperate saying, *directly tending to bring all things to a level, which is the greatest misfortune that can befall any people* : for to what end were cities and commonwealths established, but only that every one might be safer and securer in the enjoyment of his own ? For though men are by nature sociable creatures, yet it was the design of preserving what they had that first put them on building of cities for a refuge. It is a second duty of the governors of a state to see that the people be not forced to pay taxes, as they often were in our

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*, ii, ch. xxi.

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

forefathers' time, partly because they were always in war, and partly by reason of the lowness of the Treasury. This is an inconvenience which ought, as far as possible, to be provided against beforehand."

Rome knew risings of slaves, and the most serious attempt at social reform was the movement of the Gracchi. Plutarch (*Lives*) describes as follows the movement of the Gracchi :

"Tiberius, maintaining an honourable and just cause, and possessed of eloquence sufficient to have made a less creditable action appear plausible, was no safe or easy antagonist, when, with the people crowding around the hustings, he took his place and spoke in behalf of the poor. "The savage beasts," said he, "in Italy, *have their particular dens, they have their places of repose and refuge ; but the men who bear arms, and expose their lives for the safety of their country, enjoy in the meantime nothing more in it but the air and light ; and, having no houses or settlements of their own, are constrained to wander from place to place with their wives and children.*" He told them that the commanders were guilty of a ridiculous error when, at the head of their armies, they exhorted the common soldiers to fight for their sepulchres and altars ; when not any amongst so many Romans is possessed of either altar or monument, neither have they any houses of their own, nor hearths of their ancestors to defend. They fought indeed and were slain, but it was to maintain the luxury and the wealth of other men. They were styled the masters of the world, but in the meantime had not one foot of ground which they could call their own. An harangue of this nature, spoken to an enthusiastic and sympathising audience, by a person of commanding spirit and genuine feelings,



no adversaries at that time were competent to oppose. Forbearing, therefore, all discussion and debate, they addressed themselves to Marcus Octavius, his fellow-tribune, who, being a young man of a steady, orderly character, and an intimate friend of Tiberius, upon this account declined at first the task of opposing him ; but at length, over-persuaded with the repeated importunities of numerous considerable persons, he was prevailed upon to do so, and hindered the passing of the law ; it being the rule that any tribune has a power to hinder an Act, and that all the rest can effect nothing if only one of them dissents. Tiberius, irritated at these proceedings, presently laid aside this milder Bill, but at the same time preferred another ; which, as it was more grateful to the common people, so it was much more severe against the wrongdoers, commanding them to make an immediate surrender of all lands which, contrary to former laws, had come into their possession. Hence there arose daily contentions between him and Octavius in their orations. However, though they expressed themselves with the utmost heat and determination, they yet were never known to descend to any personal reproaches, or in their passion to let slip any indecent expressions, so as to derogate from one another.”<sup>1</sup>

So the champion of the people who endeavoured to find shelter for those who had shed their blood in the service of Rome failed in his endeavour. So did his brother Caius Gracchus. Of the latter's efforts Plutarch, who cannot be accused of any tendency towards social reform, says :

“ Of the laws which he now proposed, with the object of gratifying the people and abridging the power of

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *Lives*, Tiberius Gracchus (A. H. Clough's transl.).

## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

the Senate, the first was concerning the public lands, which were to be divided amongst the poor citizens ; another was concerning the common soldiers, that they be clothed at the public charge, without any diminution of their pay, and that none should be obliged to serve in the army who was not full seventeen years old ; another gave the same right to all the Italians in general, of voting at elections, as was enjoyed by the citizens of Rome ; a fourth related to the price of corn, which was to be sold at a lower rate than formerly to the poor ; and a fifth regulated the courts of justice, greatly reducing the power of the senators. For hitherto, in all causes, senators only sat as judges, and were therefore much dreaded by the Roman knights and the people. But Caius joined three hundred ordinary citizens of equestrian rank with the senators, who were three hundred likewise in number, and ordained that the judicial authority should be equally invested in the six hundred. While he was arguing for the ratification of this law, his behaviour was observed to show in many respects unusual earnestness, and whereas other popular leaders had always hitherto, when speaking, turned their faces towards the Senate-house, and the place called the *comitium*, he, on the contrary, was the first man that in his harangue to the people turned himself the other way, towards them, and continued after that time to do so. *An insignificant movement and change of posture, yet it marked no small revolution in State affairs—the conversion, in a manner, of the whole government from an aristocracy to a democracy*, his action intimating that public speakers should address themselves to the people, not the Senate.”<sup>1</sup>

But the attempt of the Gracchi cannot be called

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *Lives*, “Caius Gracchus” (A. H. Clough’s trns.).

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

any serious endeavour of social reform in the interests of either labour or of social democracy, although Plutarch evidently sees in the attitude of Caius Gracchu when speaking, an indication of democracy.

Cicero, the Stoic, criticised severely any attempt made at social or economic reform in his *De Officiis*. "But those," he writes, "who, designing to curry their favour, (i.e. of the people) attempt new laws about the levelling of estates, so as to force the right owners from their lawful possessions, or propose to make creditors remit all the debts, which in justice are due to them, plainly undermine the two principal pillars and supports of the government: in the first place, concord and unity amongst the citizens, which can never be kept up whilst some are deprived of what is justly their due and others discharged from the necessity of payment; secondly, justice, which immediately must sink into ruins if men cannot be secured in the possession of what is their own: for that (as we before remarked) is the chief end and aim of men's gathering into societies and building of cities, that each one might freely enjoy what is his right, without any danger of fear of being deprived of it. Besides this, the authors of these pernicious designs never get that good-will, which they propose, from their citizens; for as for these men, who are losers by such a method, it is certain that they will be their enemies for it; and those who are gainers will be sure to pretend that they never desired it, especially in the business of having debts forgiven: there everyone dissembles how glad he is of it for fear it should be thought he was not able to pay them, but those men, to whom such designs are prejudicial, will hardly forget them, but show a perpetual grudge and resentment."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Officiis*, ii, ch. xxii.



## LABOUR AND DEMOCRACY IN ROME

Anyhow, the attempt of the Gracchi had failed, and so did that of Catilina, and the Roman proletariat had become so pauperised that it made no serious attempt to obtain economic justice. In the days of Julius Cæsar—according to Suetonius—there were 320,000 corn recipients, that is, people receiving the dole. Thus the backbone of the people, the free peasants, were in a miserable position when the Empire had risen on the ruins of the Republic. Whilst the big landowners had increased their wealth, thanks to the inexhaustible number of slaves at their disposal, the free small farmers were ruined and crowded the towns. Here, together with freed slaves, they constituted the lowest strata of society, or the proletariat. As long, however, as Rome was a democratic Republic, at least politically, if not socially, the poverty of the masses was not yet identical with its misery. Possessing political power, the people had the means of sometimes exacting laws and subsidies, which, however, did not prevent pauperism. Not only *panes* and *circenses*, but also various social reforms, were they able to effect. All attempts, however, to help the proletariat to introduce a thoroughgoing social reform and to lift up free labour were shattered on the rock of capitalistic opposition.

When, however, the people had lost all political power, the only source of income of the ancient proletariat disappeared, in Rome the political power and franchise having been a source of revenue for the proletariat. To be poor began to mean to be really miserable, and the misery of the people led to a state of affairs hitherto unknown in Roman history. Pauperism and misery became pressing social questions urging for a speedy solution,

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
for the rich were becoming still richer and the poor poorer.<sup>1</sup>

The economic state of Rome was thus a deplorable one. From the dizzy height which the Roman Empire had reached under Augustus and his successors, Rome was slowly gliding down to the bottom of the precipice, wherein the invasion of the barbarians found her. But already, at the beginning of the century of our era, the downfall and the approaching catastrophe were felt by thinking men. All those who were in sympathy with the suffering masses thought of an escape. Various answers were given to the great and perplexing question. The Platonic ideal was revived, but met with little success. Only a superhuman power, a miracle, could save suffering humanity. Those who did not believe in miracles fell into a brooding, despairing pessimism, or drowned the torturing thoughts in orgies. The lower classes, however, among whom pessimism is not so frequent as among the more highly differentiated, and who had no means of indulging in orgies, began to believe in a miracle and to expect it. These lower strata of society, who felt the misery naturally much more than the possessing classes and the idle rich, began to cling to this hope like a drowning man to a plank, expecting a Redeemer from Heaven who would found a kingdom upon earth. In this kingdom there would be neither war nor poverty, but joy, peace, and plenty would reign supreme.

Such was the state of Rome when Christianity made its appearance on the banks of Jordan and thence was imported to Rome by St. Paul.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. K. Kautsky, *Die Vorläufer, des Sozialismus*, vol. i, p. 19.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE  
SOCIAL QUESTION



“ ‘ The Glad Tidings ’ are announced to the poor : the last shall be first and the first last ; blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the earth ; woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation ; the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. ‘ It was on earth that the transformation was to take place. ’ ”

E. DE LAVELEYE : *Socialism of To-day.*

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

FOR over a century now theologians, historians, and philosophers have busied themselves with the question of the historicity of Jesus and His life. A. Schweitzer <sup>1</sup> and W. Sanday <sup>2</sup> have given exhaustive accounts of the history and development of this problem.

One group of scholars has endeavoured to prove that Jesus never existed; He is a mythical personality invented by man. Christianity, in their opinion, is simply the result of that faith in the Divine Redemption to which humanity clings. Such are the opinions of J. M. Robertson, A. Drews, B. Smith, S. Lublinski, and numerous other authors. Other scholars, whilst believing in the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth, represent Him as an obscure dreamer, a stirrer-up of the people. The evangelical records of the life of Christ and of His teaching are looked upon as free inventions of His immediate disciples and of St. Paul, and the words ascribed to the Saviour as pure invention. A third group, i.e. the scholars who consider Jesus of Nazareth as a great teacher and as a prophet, insist either upon His religious or social teaching.

We must not omit to mention a fourth group of writers, whom the reader, even if he were not informed, would at once recognise as Teutonic or German. These

<sup>1</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> W. Sanday, *The Life of Jesus in Recent Research*.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

writers cannot reconcile themselves to the fact that the Saviour was of Jewish origin. They either try to deprive Him of His Jewishness, or refuse to recognise Him, *on account* of His very Jewishness. First and foremost among them is Houston Chamberlain.<sup>1</sup> MacClymont<sup>2</sup> mentions that Professor Haupt, of Baltimore (of German origin), also expressed the opinion that Mary and Joseph were racially Aryan Medes, the majority of the inhabitants of Galilee having been Medes. Delitzsch, of Bible and Babel fame,<sup>3</sup> maintains that the parents of Jesus were certainly not of Jewish blood, but belonged to the great number of Galilean Jewish proselytes. Jesus Christ, he asserts, was no prophet of Jewish blood. His conception of the Deity, diametrically opposed to the Jewish idea, all His speeches, and His whole life and death prove this clearly.

Chamberlain flatly refuses to recognise the Saviour as of Jewish origin. "Educated in the Jewish faith, He did not live in a *milieu* which could be called Jewish in the strict sense of the word."<sup>4</sup> Chamberlain's contention is based on the fact that the inhabitants of Galilee differed temperamentally from the inhabitants of Judæa; their dialect also was unlike that of Jerusalem (a peasant of Yorkshire and a farmer of Kent are therefore not the sons of one race). A different point of view is taken up by the pessimist philosopher Eduard v. Hartmann. Hartmann does not identify the pessimism of the Saviour with that of Buddha. The pessimism of the former is not metaphysical, but revolutionary (*Entrüstungs-pessimism*), the result of unbearable political and social circum-

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des 19ten Jahrhunderts*.

<sup>2</sup> MacClymont, *New Testament Criticism*, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Delitzsch, *Die Grosse Täuschung*, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> *Mensch u. Gott*, 1920.



## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

stances. Jesus and His teachings, in Hartmann's opinion, belong to Judaism, and are alien to modern ethical conception.<sup>1</sup> "Jesus," says Hartmann, "has a contempt for labour (we shall prove the contrary) and is no respecter of either property or family. His gospel is plebeian and excludes every aristocracy, not only the aristocracy of rank, possession, and fortune, but also the aristocracy of intellect."<sup>2</sup> The German philosopher further accuses the Saviour of Semitic roughness, referring particularly to Mark iv. 12. "Hartmann's attack," writes Schweitzer rightly, "is the open fight of the German spirit with Jesus."

I shall only briefly refer to that group of writers who deny the very existence of Jesus. Thus Kalthoff,<sup>3</sup> who denies the historicity of Jesus, considers the origin of Christianity as the result of a combination of religious and social circumstances, in the Roman Empire, stimulated by the Jewish Messianic expectations. Eruptive forces had accumulated in the Roman Empire among the oppressed slaves and the proletariat. A movement had consequently arisen which took a messianic and apocalyptic tinge. It was due, says Kalthoff, to Jewish influence. The Jewish Synagogue had influenced Roman social conditions to such an extent that the social fermentation became fused with the religious and philosophical forces of the age and produced the new movement called Christian Culture.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, astral myths, Alexandrinism, Esseneism, Gnosticism, Stoicism, and Cæsarism, Mandaism, and other intellectual and religious movements, were responsible for the formation of a Christianity without Christ, or rather for a Christ-myth without Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> See also Schweitzer, loc. cit., p. 351.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> A. Kalthoff, *Das Christusproblem, Grundlinien zu einer Sozialtheologie*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Kalthoff, however, discovered proletarian tendencies in the gospels, or, as he calls it, in the Christ-myth. Maurenbrecher,<sup>1</sup> who, by the way, believes in the historicity of Jesus, expresses similar views. He does not, however, admit that the Saviour was a revolutionary or social reformer. As an eschatological prophet, Jesus expected everything from Divine interference and not from human agitation.<sup>2</sup>

Christianity for Kalthoff is the result of social movements in Rome, not in Judæa. Just as the Jesus, he says, of the Fourth Gospel is speaking the language of Neo-Platonism, so is the Jesus of the other gospels above the world of ideas of Palestinian Judaism. "The ideal of the Jesus of the Gospels has passed the ethical boundaries of the old Jahve."<sup>3</sup> Behind Kalthoff's assumed superiority there lurks a mild German *Judenhass*. Bruno Bauer<sup>4</sup> explains Christianity without Christ as the result not of social movements, but of Græco-Roman philosophy in Rome. Whilst Kalthoff and Bauer thus see the origin of evolution of Christianity in Rome, Kautsky prefers Judæa as the place of origin and evolution of Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

According to the modern so-called scientific socialism, everything is subject to economic factors. Right, politics, religion, ethics, art, and philosophy are all swayed by and subject to economic changes and circumstances. A change in the economic basis of life, as a result of the development of the forces of production, is supposed to produce a corresponding change in the moral and spiritual life of humanity. This is called historical materialism. From this materialistic

<sup>1</sup> M. Maurenbrecher, *Von Nazareth nach Golgotha*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Kalthoff, loc. cit., p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Bruno Bauer, *Jesus und die Caesaren*.

<sup>5</sup> Kautsky, *Die Entstehung des Christentums*.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

point of view numerous attempts have been made to explain the origin and development of Christianity without Christ, because, so it is asserted, there is as little connection between Jesus of Nazareth and Christianity as between America and Amerigo Vespucci. Kautsky, in his *Origin of Christianity*, says that for the historian, whose purpose it is to explain Christianity as a world-event, the personality of Jesus is of comparatively small importance. It is possible, however, he admits, that Jesus had really lived and played a rôle in first Christian communities.<sup>1</sup> Bruno Bauer, again, in his famous work,<sup>2</sup> pointed out the influence of the Roman Stoa upon Christianity, and declared the personality of Jesus and of Paul as literary fiction. Seneca and Philo Judæus are, in Bauer's opinion, the real founders of Christianity. The famous letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, where reference is made to the Divine worship given to Christ, the passage in the annals of Tacitus (xv. 44), referring to the execution of Christ by Pontius Pilatus, are explained away as interpolations.

Samuel Lublinsky<sup>3</sup> propounded the idea that Christianity—without Christ—came into existence as the result of the destruction of Jerusalem. A pre-Christian Christ had existed before Jesus, and there were Christian sects long before the fall of Jerusalem. "Christianity," writes Lublinsky, "owes its origin and wide spread more to the fear of demons and the belief in the redeeming magic power of the new mysticism than to anything else."<sup>4</sup>

Christianity is thus supposed to be the dual result of the ancient mysteries, and the mysteries have at

<sup>1</sup> *Neue Zeit*, 1885, p. 543.

<sup>2</sup> Bruno Bauer, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Entstehung des Christentums aus der antiken Kultur*, 1910.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 248.



once a magic and a moral basis. The moral ideas of the Christian movement were asceticism and humility, so as to be delivered from the demons after death. But nothing is more opposed to asceticism than wealth ; wealth, therefore, was the real danger for the redemption of the soul, because the rich would forget to gather treasures in heaven by means of ascetic virtues. Hence the Christian ideal of poverty. The modern conception of class-hatred does not entitle us to suppose similar movements in the past, even if we meet with a hatred against wealth, the arrogance of the rich and the idealisation of poverty. Instead of class-movement, it may be the effect of ethical romanticism.<sup>1</sup>

More numerous are the scholars who believe in the historicity of Jesus, but differ as to His message.

Rauschenbusch<sup>2</sup> maintains that Jesus was not a social reformer in the modern sense of the word. Sociology and political economy were both alien to Him. They were beyond the horizon of His visions and thoughts, just as organic chemistry or the geography of America. It is only from a moral, not from an economical, point of view that Jesus approached the problem of suffering. The economic questions interested Him only in their relation to morality.<sup>3</sup> Why Rauschenbusch should separate moral and economic questions I fail to understand. Rauschenbusch, however, very pertinently remarks that, even if the economic question is once for all settled, if everything is organised in such a way as to provide man with the highest possible measure of comfort, it is quite possible that he would still be haunted by the terrible spectre of his existence, and by the feeling that life is an illusion, a riddle devoid of

<sup>1</sup> Lublinsky, loc. cit., vol. ii, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Rauschenbusch, *The Social Teaching of Christianity* (French edition).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

sense. Were the question of the distribution of wealth satisfactorily solved for all members of the community, and all were to live in comfort, many would still be missing that inner peace, that supreme joy which alone lends beauty to visible things. Universal prosperity is not incompatible with a *Weltschmerz*.<sup>1</sup>

Rauschenbusch has thus unconsciously characterised the teaching of Jesus. What distinguishes the Gospel of Social Democracy of Jesus are the ideal, moral, and religious elements which He infused into it. His was not a political democracy. It was not an economic democracy, but a social democracy, which He taught, a social democracy as I have defined it in Chapter II. And such a social democracy is based on idealism, morality, and religion. Only then can it be realised and endure. Based on materialism and the iron laws of nature, it will simply degenerate into tyranny. Men without idealism must hate social democracy, or democratisation of society. Bolshevism is only a misnomer for tyranny.

Peabody<sup>2</sup> expresses similar views. Although Jesus was always mixing with all sorts and conditions of men and women, although He shared the sympathies, the joys and sufferings of human life, although nearly all social questions and problems of His time were submitted to Him, His teaching was not directed towards social questions. What He aimed at was not really the reorganisation of society, but the revelations made to the human soul of its relation to God.<sup>3</sup> Jesus was not a reformer but a revealer. His mission was religion, and His aim to renew the bond which united the souls of men with their Heavenly Father.

<sup>1</sup> Rauschenbusch, loc. cit., p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* (French edition), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Shailer Matthews, who endeavours to prove that the substance of Jesus' teaching is the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men, and that His social doctrine is Divine Sonship and consequent human brotherliness (p. 198), distinguishes in the Gospels two elements; the teachings of Jesus, and the editorial matter added by their writers. The second element is considerable in the Fourth Gospel, but by no means wanting in the Synoptics. He admits that much of the social teachings of Jesus is to be found in the Third Gospel, attributing it to Luke, who was also undoubtedly the writer of the Acts, and who has shown himself intensely sympathetic with the poor.<sup>1</sup>

Many other scholars, although believing in the historicity of Jesus, deny the idea that He ever had any intention of preaching a social gospel. They prove from the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus never had or would have anything to do with earthly conditions of man. On the contrary, he clearly told his followers to respect social differences ordained by God. "Obey and respect your betters" is an idea to which the Church of Rome has given shape and form and based upon it its philosophy of politics and economy. This conception it has steadfastly developed and impressed upon its faithful sons and daughters. Professor Harnack<sup>2</sup> criticises the idea according to which it was the intention of Jesus to bring about a general condition of poverty and distress, to introduce a scheme of Poplarism, to spread pauperism, so as to base upon it His Kingdom of Heaven. On the contrary, He combated poverty, but He considered sin worse than want and economic misery. But although He com-

<sup>1</sup> Shailer Matthews, *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, p. 141, note 2, and 198 Macmillan, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 91.



## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

bated poverty, He laid down no social programme for the suppression of it, because Jesus was no social reformer. Nevertheless, Professor Harnack admits that the Gospel is a social message in so far as it proclaims solidarity and brotherliness, in favour of the poor. Says Professor Harnack: "In this sense it is profoundly socialistic, just as it is profoundly individualistic, because it establishes the infinite and independent value of every human soul. Its tendency to union and brotherliness is not so much an accidental phenomenon in its history as the essential feature of its character." <sup>1</sup> "As has been truly said, its object is to transform the socialism which rests on the basis of conflicting interests into the socialism which rests on the consciousness of a spiritual unity." <sup>2</sup> In other words, Christianity is a socialism of the soul and not a socialism of economics.

In opposition to Professor Harnack, the Gospel is considered by many, especially by Christian Socialists, as a social gospel, a message to the poor, and Jesus is looked upon as a social reformer, who preached not only equality of all men, but also economic reform for the benefit of the miserable and oppressed proletarians. Jesus was a working-man Himself, a proletarian. "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," sounds almost like a distant echo of the lines of the famous Communist Manifesto. He dreamed of the economic emancipation of the proletariat, and His aim was to better the social condition of the oppressed classes.

Christianity, therefore, Christian Socialists maintain, socialism and modern social democracy, are not only related but absolutely identical. The modern

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, loc. cit., pp. 103-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

social democratic party is nothing but original Christianity. Christianity was the result of economic factors, or the miserable state of the proletariat in Judæa and in Rome. "Cæsarism," writes Bebel,<sup>1</sup> "was the necessary result of the existing material social contradictions, and Christianity was the necessary consequence of the spiritual consequences of such material contradictions." "Ces hommes," writes Duruy,<sup>2</sup> "qui allaient briser l'ancienne société étaient les plus grands révolutionnaires que le monde eût encore vus."<sup>3</sup>

The Kingdom of Heaven was simply an Oriental metaphor, and the message Jesus brought was a social democratic message which He preached to the ancient proletarians, the victims of Jewish and especially Roman capitalism. He pictured to His audience a social democratic republic, a labour republic, wherein justice, peace, and plenty would reign, which would surely be realised on earth in spite of all the conservative and plutocratic, aristocratic and capitalistic elements. Jesus, these writers assert, criticised the misery of His time, when the idle rich lived on the labour of the poor; when he who worked much had little and he who worked little had much; when, moreover, men who were anxious to work were unemployed, and free men had to find refuge in the *ergastula*, where they worked in company with slaves. Numerous passages in the Gospels are quoted in corroboration, wherein it is quite demonstrated that the labourer should receive in full the produce of his labour,<sup>4</sup> and that he who does not work should not eat. A full description of

<sup>1</sup> Bebel, *Glossen zu die wahre Gestalt des Christentums*, 1892, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire des Romains*, vol. iv, p. 295.

<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, Liebknecht maintained that only ignorance and mean speculation could pretend that Socialism is true Christianity.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 10; Matt. vi. 33.



## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

the State as Jesus is supposed to have imagined it is given by Jesus in the following passage<sup>1</sup> :

Matt. xx. 1-15 : For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle : and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing ; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle ? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more ; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong : didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take up that which is thine, and go thy way ; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own ? or is thine eye evil, because I am good ?

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xx. 1-15.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

The idea that it was an equality of souls that Jesus preached is further ridiculed by the Christian Socialists of this trend of thought. For how could the proletarian, who did not know where to place his head, have promised his fellow-sufferers a postmortal equality in heaven? What He wanted was the equality of men here upon earth, and not only an internationalism where there is neither Greek nor Jew, free- or bond-man, but a perfect economic equality. He is even supposed to have gone so far as to excite the hatred of the proletarians against the wealthy propertied classes, and his own hatred is manifested in his refusal to admit the rich into the heaven of his future Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

"But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you, ye that are full now! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you, ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!"

And James uses even stronger language against the rich<sup>2</sup>:

"Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. . . . Behold the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

Only those who suffered, who toiled and laboured, who hungered and were thirsty, the proletariat, would dictate in the future state. In short, Jesus preached the abolition of capital, which, according to communistic teaching, is bound to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth at any time of human history.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 24-6.

<sup>2</sup> James v. 1-6.

<sup>3</sup> See Goldstein, *Christentum und Sozialdemokratie*.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

It is further argued that even Harnack and all the professors of the Tübingen school misunderstood the true social and political elements of the message of Jesus when they maintained that the Kingdom of Jesus is only meant in a life to come. In reality, writes a German author, who, by the way, is not a Socialist,<sup>1</sup> Jesus never meant to preach that the son of poor people, a proletarian, was a God, and the Kingdom He wished to found for His suffering brethren was not behind the clouds or beyond the grave, but on earth ; not in a dim and distant future, but in the present, for His contemporaries. As for the doctrine of awakening of the dead, he argues that it is only meant metaphorically. When Jesus speaks of the awakening of the dead, He only means the conversion from the old bourgeois conception and adherence to the proletarian party. By the dead He meant metaphorically the bourgeoisie, and by the living, the labour and proletarian party. There are passages in the Gospel which would almost corroborate such a theory.<sup>2</sup>

To be distinguished from awakening of the dead is the resurrection. Whilst the former expression, argues the above-quoted author, signified in the Gospel the state of promise, resurrection meant the actual realisation. The followers of Jesus had awakened, but resurrected they could only be in the actual existing proletarian and communistic State. The resurrection would take place on the day when the new state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of communism, would be realised.<sup>3</sup>

In truly Oriental style and phantasy this is described in the Apocalypse. The passage in Luke ix. 27 shows

<sup>1</sup> Goldstein, loc. cit., p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Rom. vi. 3-11 ; Col. ii. 12-13 ; Rom. vii. 10, 11.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 1-3 ; Luke xii. 40 ; Matt. xxiv. 17-22.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

even more clearly that Jesus meant a new state for his contemporaries here on earth.

The intention of Christ, therefore, both according to some Christian Socialists and many detractors of Christianity *and* Socialism, was to found a new Jerusalem, freed from the despotism of capital, a labour and democratic State where proletarians would dictate and the rich would be subservient. As for the famous passages in Matthew (vi. 25-34) and Luke (xii. 22-32) which have been utilised to show the neglect of labour and the hope of reward in heaven, they are supposed to have meant a description of the future economic state after the redistribution of wealth. The descriptions of a future social democratic and communistic state are to be found in Matthew vi. 25-34; Luke xii. 22-32; and especially in Apocalypse xix. 19-21; xxi. 1-4; 9-27; xxii. 1-5.

They are only a little more Oriental and fantastic than the descriptions of more modern Utopias, such as that of Bellamy or the description of Fourier's phalanges.<sup>1</sup>

Herron<sup>2</sup> goes even so far as to maintain that the Sermon on the Mount is in no sense a sermon, least of all a discourse on individual piety, but a political document, given on a political occasion, as truly as the great charter or the Declaration of Independence.

The well-known socialist Laveleye has also endeavoured to prove that Christianity and Socialism or Communism are identical, and that the ideas and sentiments which have given birth to Socialism were deeply engraven upon our hearts and minds by Christianity. "Every Christian," writes Laveleye, "who understands and earnestly accepts the teaching

<sup>1</sup> Goldstein, *loc. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> Herron, *The Christian Society*, p. 51.



## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

of his Master is at heart a Socialist, and every Socialist, whatever may be his hatred against all religion, bears within himself an unconscious Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> He finds it, therefore, impossible to understand by what strange blindness Socialists adopt Darwinian theories (namely, that only those survive in the struggle for existence who are best adapted to their circumstances, and that the stronger slowly eliminate the weaker), which condemn their claims of equality, while at the same time they reject Christianity, whence those claims have issued and whence their justification may be found.<sup>2</sup>

I have thus given a brief sketch of the opinions held by various writers, believers and unbelievers, Socialists and opponents of Socialism, on Christ and Christianity. Some of them believe in the historicity of Jesus, others deny His existence. Some consider Christianity, with or without Christ, as identical with Socialism or social democracy, as a political movement, whilst others see no connection whatever in the two movements. One is purely religious, the other purely economic.

Now, there must be some reason for such a divergence of opinions. This, I think, is to be sought in the numerous contradictions which one meets in the Gospels, just as we find contradictions in the Old Testament. There are numerous passages in the Synoptic Gospels which clearly manifest only a religious tendency, and show that the teaching of the Saviour was only religious, spiritual, and ethical ; but there are others which will bear not only a political, but also a social, interpretation.

<sup>1</sup> Laveleye, *Socialism of To-day*, p. xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xx.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

On the one hand, we read of the freedom and liberty announced to the poor and oppressed and of a perfect social equality. There is a breath of democracy wafted to us from the pages of the Gospels. On the other hand, the slave is enjoined to obey his master, and St. Paul says that everybody should remain in the position in which God has placed him. Thus revolt and submission, social democracy and class-distinction, communism of possessions and the principle of private property, are at once defended in the Gospels. That is, in my opinion, the reason why many Christian Socialists see in Christianity the origin of Socialism, whilst others, on the contrary, accuse Christianity of being the pillar and prop of Capitalism and oppression.

Voltaire had already pointed out the contradictions which are encountered in the New Testament with regard to social questions. And indeed, numerous are the passages wherein the depressed and downtrodden are promised freedom and emancipation, not in a dim and distant future, but *here*, on earth, during their earthly life. The dignity of labour is praised and the proletarian is exalted. In a word, *we find two distinct currents of thought in the Gospels*. One is revolutionary, intensely democratic, breathing a spirit of revolt, bordering even on anarchy, touching upon economic and social questions, exciting the hatred of the lowly and oppressed against the idle rich, the oppressors, the tyrants, the exploiters, and the capitalists. It preaches social war: "I have not come to bring peace, but to preach war." But there is also another current of thought which is opposed to revolution. It manifests a tendency to pure religion, an obedience to authority, submission, and contentment with the lot on earth in expectation of the reward hereafter. The Gospels of James, Matthew, and Luke especially contain the



## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

democratic revolutionary passages, whilst the Letters of St. Paul are full of advice to be submissive.

Voltaire and others suggested interpolations. Numerous Christian scholars have, on account of these contradictions, upheld either the social and economic, or the religious thesis, either neglecting the texts which corroborate the opposite view, or interpreting these passages in such a way as to suit their purpose.

Now, what is the true explanation, and how are these contradictory currents and tendencies to be explained? The questions by which we are faced are: Did Jesus, as a successor of the Hebrew prophets, come to preach a social and democratic gospel, a gospel of labour in the interests of the Judæan proletariat, against the plutocracy and industrial magnates of his own country and of Imperial Rome, "the brigands on the Tiber," or was He simply concerned with religion and paid no attention to social questions?

How are we further to explain the numerous contradictions which point either one way or the other?

In my opinion the reason of the contradictions is to be sought in the history of the origin and development of primitive Christianity. Two currents of thought, blowing from different sources, swelled the stream of Christianity before it discharged its waters upon the Aryan world. *The one was Judæo-Galilean, the other Græco-Roman.* The first supplied the economic, socially democratic, revolutionary, and proletarian element. It contained the gospel of labour and of social democracy of the prophets. It preached a "New Society," wherein, labour being dignified, the working-classes, and the *Amei-Haaretz*, the masses, the proletariat, would be equal to, and even superior (I do not say dictate) to, the idle rich, the hitherto exploiting classes. It is the Judæo-Galilean element which



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

supplies the intensely democratic atmosphere of the Gospels, breathing a spirit of revolt and of social democracy, i.e. of a democratised society. Its background is at once economic and moral, for, being fundamentally Jewish, *it fuses into one religion and ethics, economics and social life*. The second element is Græco-Roman. Issuing from Judæa, originally a Jewish religious and social movement, Christianity entered the European world through two gates, namely Rome and Alexandria. On the way it gathered the elements of the culture and civilisation it came across, with which it mixed and mingled and utilised them. It is to Alexandria, to Neo-Platonism, and to the new philosophical schools of Hellenism that the mystico-metaphysical elements of Christianity can be traced. It is absolutely indifferent to social questions.

Alexander the Great had planted a Jewish colony in the town which he had founded on the shores of the Mediterranean. The Jews returned to Egypt, not as industrial slaves, but as free citizens. Here they multiplied and prospered exceedingly.

After a lapse of three centuries, the small colony amounted to a million souls. They differed in speech and dress from their Palestinian brethren. The Jews of Palestine had some difficulty in recognising these distant emancipated Greek brethren as Jews, although the latter knew well enough their Palestinian co-religionists. "And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew him not." They spoke and prayed to their God in the language of their adopted country, and a day came on which the Old Testament was translated into Greek. Holy Scripture thus became accessible to the heathen world, for the Word of God came forth from Alexandria. Here, where the culture of the Orient and Occident mixed and mingled, the

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Jews had already begun their work as Apostles of a new morality among the heathen. Nurtured by the milk of Greek philosophy, they nevertheless kept the torch of Judaism alive, for they made it accessible to their brethren in the Diaspora who no longer understood Hebrew. Through the Septuaginta the spirit of the Orient came down upon the Occident world. This book was the first message of Judaism to the heathen world, and for the first time the citizens of the Roman Empire listened to the lofty words of the prophets and heard the melancholy tunes of the Psalms.<sup>1</sup>

There was a constant intellectual relation between Palestine and Alexandria during the last pre-Christian century. From Palestine, Aristobul emigrated to Egypt, where he became one of the most prominent collaborators on the work of Hebraism with Hellenism. The Alexandrian Jew Apollos, a contemporary of Paul, became one of the most ardent collaborators of the Apostle to the heathens, and introduced into Paul's Christianity Alexandrian philosophical ideas. There were also communities of Alexandrian Jews in Palestine during the life of Jesus. Thus religious philosophical ideas of the Judæo-Alexandrian school had found their way to Judæa and may be traced to the Gospels, as, for instance, the terms of *dynamis sophia*, *logos*.<sup>2</sup> Hatch<sup>3</sup> has also proved the influence of Greek ideas upon the explanation and exegesis of the Old and the New Testaments, which endeavoured to look upon the words as veils of a hidden meaning. Aristobulus, and particularly Philo, thus explained away the metamorphism of the Old Testament. The reconciliation of Greek philosophy and theology, the

<sup>1</sup> Hausrath, *Neutestamentl. Zeitung*, vol. ii, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Friedländer, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Christentums*, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> E. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

method of the school of Alexandria, was applied to the New Testament as it had been to the Old Testament. The methods of the School of Philo were applied to the New Testament even more than to the Old. Says Hatch<sup>1</sup>: "Historical events and allusions to them, poetical figures and Oriental metaphors, were interpreted in a mystical and allegorical sense." (Twenty centuries hence—with due reverence to Christ—people reading allusions in a speech of Lloyd George will perhaps wonder.)

The thoughts of the past are relative to the present, and must be interpreted by it. A written word is no more than a spoken word; and a spoken word is taken in the sense in which the speaker used it, at the time at which he used it.

In the Stoic philosophy, again, Christianity found those elements of social ethics which it mixed and mingled with its primitive Galilean teachings. Thus Alexandrian Jews, under the influence of Neo-Platonism, supplied the mystical, religious elements and the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven. But Rome of the Cæsars, with the help of St. Paul and of the Stoa, eagerly turned the democratic and social movement which originated in Galilee, and the proletarian revolt, into a purely religious channel. The proletarian was crushed, and the gospel of labour which Jesus, as a successor of the prophets, had preached was interpreted in a mystic manner. Paganism and Capitalism had once more triumphed. They enslaved the masses, and swindled them out of their emancipation, by feeding them with promises in a *hereafter*. Cæsar fed them with largesses, *panes* and *circenses*, and the new Christianity fed them with luxuries in a future world.

<sup>1</sup> Hatch, loc. cit., p. 76.



## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Thus the leader of the social and democratic and labour movement, of social justice, of liberty and equality, once inaugurated by the Hebrew prophets, by a shepherd of Tekoa, and now continued by a carpenter of Galilee, *who had received the Divine call of the Master*, of one Father in Heaven, who had created all men equal, was transformed into a mystical figure by the Church of Rome, based on Cæsarism, capitalism, and slavery. It was a transvaluation of values. The Roman and not the Galilean had conquered. The Hebrew prophets had preached a social message, but a message not based on a purely materialistic conception of history. It was a social message at once economic and ideal, as it united economics and idealism, ethics and politics, love, labour, and social justice. This Gospel was continued by Jesus, for this was the Judæo-Galilean element in His teaching.<sup>1</sup>

It is the Jewish, the prophetic, the Judæo-Galilean element in the teaching of Jesus which breathes the spirit of democracy and of a "will to power"; the will to power of democracy, of the working-classes, and of the proletariat, anxious to burst their bonds and to emancipate themselves. The Græco-Roman element is responsible for the "will to Heaven."

The result was that the first Christians in Rome looked upon themselves as citizens of heaven, and disdained any amelioration of their lot on earth. The Christian doctrine, as now interpreted, contained no elements which could become dangerous to the State, or even objectionable. As a religion—prepared by St. Paul—where the economic and democratic elements were either eliminated or interpreted alle-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. C. S. Montefiore is not so far wrong, as Melamed maintains (*Der Staat*, p. 26, note 1), when he asserts that Jesus is the last of the Hebrew prophets.

gorically, dished up to the Roman world, there was no danger for either Cæsarism or capitalism.

Broken by oppression, by the misery of ages, by suffering and sorrow, degradation and despair, the labourer, the lowly, and the poor in the vast Roman Empire considered themselves as born and destined to maintain the great, mighty, and fortunate by the fruits of their labours. Millions were suffering misery, in spite of the famous *pax Romana*. For what was this famous *pax Romana*? It was the peace of physical and moral degeneration, of economical misery. There was no ray of hope on the dark horizon, no dawn visible in the long dark night. No ray of light tinted with Orient hues the dark sky of oppression. The state of the proletarians in the Roman Empire may be compared to that of the so-called bourgeoisie in Russia of Bolshevism. But Rome was then the strongest Power on earth, and no one could crush it. The only hope was suicide, or escape into a beyond. There was, however, the danger of the proletariat becoming aware of its strength and rising in revolt. It was this element of danger which Rome had feared in the teaching of Christ. But this revolutionary teaching never penetrated to Rome.

Men abandoned hope and turned their eyes towards heaven or another world. It was at such a moment that Christianity was brought to Rome. But it appeared under a mythical guise. The love of justice and equality, the ideas of happiness for the poor and oppressed, the revolutionary element were eliminated, and the reward transferred to the Kingdom of Heaven. In this respect Christianity was no longer a revolutionary movement. On the contrary, it averted the explosion of a revolution on the part of the proletariat, by enjoining submission and patience upon its followers.



## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

If this life is only a probation, and the oppressed and downtrodden, by enduring privations without a murmur, by obeying those in power, by suffering iniquity, by being cast out here below, had the prospect of reaping their reward beyond the tomb, and of enjoying felicity in a better world, then there was no need to change the social and economic conditions here. What good of bothering about a fleeting moment, when the suffering meant endless felicity in a near future? That is the reason of the vast success of Christianity, *speaking from a strictly human and historical point of view*, and the failure of the influence of the prophets. The prophets had spoken of a realisation of social justice upon earth here, and not in Paradise, in the present and not in the future life.

The poor, not seeing the promises realised quickly enough, abandoned hope and gave themselves up to despair. The rich and powerful, on the other hand, afraid lest the lower classes would take it into their heads to help Providence, and help themselves, to share the happiness of social justice, in anticipation of the good things promised by the prophets, who were certainly arising the spirit of revolt and thirst for social justice; the rich were very angry with the prophets and did their best to suppress them. They were also very angry with the Founder of Christianity, who sounded a bugle-call to a suffering proletariat. But when Christianity, in coming to Rome, changed its tactics, then the wealthy welcomed it. At first they thought that the preachers of the Gospels, too, had in mind the earth and the economic life here, and they began to tremble, but when they realised that the actual distribution of wealth, which, as political economists maintain, is determined by natural laws, would, according to the apostles of the new religion,



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
take place in heaven, where resignation and obedience would be richly rewarded, they smiled approval and applauded the new gospel. They, too, turned Christians, in name, and helped to persuade the lowly that the rich are to be pitied "because they have received their consolation." Thus they left to the poor the hope of heaven, whilst they kept the earth. The poor again, used to suffering "as they were used to rain or hail," and ignorant of the advantages of quick return, did not mind waiting a little longer so as to receive a higher and ampler recompense.<sup>1</sup>

To these suffering masses, to this proletariat, Christianity, as altered and divested of its primitive Galilean elements, of its Jewishness, was offered as a consolation, as a hope and an escape. It was a hope of resurrection and of a reward in heaven. The Kingdom of God, the *civitas Dei*, became a Kingdom of Heaven, not in this world, but in the next. Man was removed from earth, from social life and terrestrial possessions. The Will to Power became a Will to Patience and a Will to Suffer. Christianity was represented as a gospel for men prepared for a heavenly journey, not for men settled upon earth, where they have been placed by their Maker, *to work*, acquire and enjoy the fruit of their labour. There could consequently be no longer any social question, any social reforms, as the Christians had nothing to do with

<sup>1</sup> But, alas! once more, in modern times, the labouring classes are turning away from the Kingdom of Heaven and are clamouring for a kingdom on earth.

They are thus becoming more dangerous than the early Christians, who gloried in suffering, submission, and patience. Hence the opposition of the Conservative forces to all Labour movements and Labour Governments. Imagine a Labour Government to-day who were to preach to its followers and supporters the following message: Suffer here, obey your betters, and you will be rewarded afterwards. Such a Government would have the staunchest support of all Conservative elements. It is the realisation of their programme on earth that makes a Labour Party dangerous.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION

earthly life. Christianity became a religion of suffering and resignation. It suited capitalist and exploiting Rome quite well.

The whole tendency of Christianity became a spirit of resignation and submission. As the cry for social justice was growing louder in Judæa and the capitalists of Rome were afraid of its penetrating to the capital and resulting in a rising of the slaves, it was necessary to find a remedy against the danger. The promises of a Kingdom of God were relegated to a next world ; hence the insistence upon the idea of resurrection, which had been clearly stated in the Second Isaiah, in the Book of Daniel, and in the Wisdom of Solomon.

In addition to these ideas of resurrection and a next world as essentials of Christianity, which did not hail from Judæa, a note of pessimism was added. The idea and the hope for a social amelioration of humanity was entirely given up. The world, as St. Augustine was to make it clear, was condemned on account of sin, and the social justice could be realised only in Heaven. Suffering, therefore, and injustice were not evils which man must avoid ; neither were they indifferent troubles to which one need pay no attention. On the contrary, they were supposed to be supreme goods which man should seek.





THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

"The 'Magnificat' is the battle-hymn of democracy. The burst of insurrection rumbles through it like the interior fires of a volcano. It is prolific in Magna Charta; the Marseillaise of the ancient world."

BOUCK WHITE, *The Call of the Carpenter*.

"Nevertheless, that love of justice and equality common to the Prophets and the Gospel still found ominous utterance in the writings of the Fathers of the Church."

E. DE LAVELEYE.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

CONSIDERED from this angle of vision, distinguishing between the Christianity of the Founder as preached in Galilee and Judæa and Christianity as brought to the Aryan world, the numerous contradictions in the Synoptic Gospels will perhaps become less striking, and the Saviour will appear to us in a new light *from the human point of view*. Mystery, religion, gnostic philosophy and Stoic philosophy exercised their respective influence over the Synoptic Gospels and other evangelical records as they are now before us. It seems to me—and everyone is entitled to hold his opinion—that by passing through Alexandria and Rome, the historical Jesus has been transformed into the Jesus of faith, or rather the Jesus of the Church of Rome. Without admitting that Christianity and the Jesus cult evolved out of a current series of Christological doctrines,<sup>1</sup> I believe that the historical Jesus has been transfigured in the interests of capitalist and exploiting Rome into a Son of God.

“The world,” writes Pearson, “owes the Jew an immense debt of gratitude for his continual protest against the false and heathen doctrines that have been connected with the person and teaching of Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

And, again: “The evangelists did not do Jesus justice. They embellished His actual life with

<sup>1</sup> See Moffat, *Theology of the Gospels*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. W. Pearson, *The Carpenter Prophet*, p. 269.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
mythical incidents. They intended to exalt, but they actually degraded Him.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus was the champion of the common people whom God loves and whom proud and cruel people have called the proletariat.<sup>2</sup> It must, however, be borne in mind that in all the Saviour’s evident sympathy with the poor there is always, not a materialistic but a spiritual and moral background.

As a successor of the Hebrew prophets, Jesus preached a gospel of democracy to the poor, the down-trodden, and the oppressed. He preached the dignity of man, of the individual, and the equality of all before God. His teaching, however, was based not on a materialistic but spiritual conception of history. Says Principal Selbie: “First there must be the discovery that underneath what is called the social problem there is a moral and spiritual problem. That is the point Jesus Christ insists upon, and our social reformers must learn to take things in their proper order.” The human Christ—I am not dealing with the question of the Divinity of Christ, which I leave to theologians—was a champion of the working-classes and of democracy.

His birth was democratic; His upbringing was democratic; His profession was democratic; His teaching was democratic, and His death was democratic. He was born in a stable, and had a manger for His cradle; He was a carpenter by profession; and He associated with poor people—fishers and working-men. He died on the cross. Had the Jews killed Him as a religious renegade, they would have stoned Him according to the law. Rome, to her eternal shame, inflicted upon Him the death-penalty of the slave.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. W. Pearson, *loc. cit.* p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

It does not enter within the scope of this work to discuss the origin of Christianity, nor to take sides with the theologians and historians, or modern socialists as to the connection existing between the origin of Christianity and the social question. My object is simply to trace the gospel of labour, of social reform and justice, and of social equality throughout the ages. It is therefore with facts I have to deal. The question confronting us is, How far has Christianity, as taught by Jesus, preached the dignity of labour, the protection of labour, social equality and social justice? I therefore venture to say that Jesus was a prophet upon whom the mantle of the old Hebrew prophets had fallen, and He never intended to give Himself out as the Son of God. He lived and died a Jew, and had He returned to-day He would feel more at home in the synagogue than in a Greek orthodox church.

Christianity cannot sever Jesus from Judaism, however much German authors may wish to do it. Judaism, without ceasing to be Judaism, can get quite near to Jesus, as Mr. Mackenzie says of Mr. Montefiore's book.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting here to quote what Nordau wrote on Jesus in a letter to P  re Hyacinthe: "J  sus est une figure juive id  ale. Il est chair de notre chair, l'  me de notre   me. Qui pourrait donc penser    le s  parer du peuple juif? Pierre sera le seul Juif qui ait dit du Fils de David: 'Je ne connais pas cet homme.' Si jusqu'   ce jour les Juifs n'ont pas ou vertement rendu hommage    la beaut   morale sublime de la personne de J  sus, cela tient,    ce que nous avons toujours   t   pers  cut  s, martyris  s, tu  s en son nom. Les Juifs ont jug   le Ma  tre d'apr  s ses disciples. . . . Chaque

<sup>1</sup> See article in Hastings's *Encyclop  dia of Ethics and Religion*, s.v. "Jesus."



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

fois qu'un Juif est retourné aux sources et qu'il a contemplé Jésus, abstraction faite de ses sectateurs, il s'est écrié, dans une admiration émue : Quelle que soit la valeur de l'idée messianique, cet homme est nous. Il est l'honneur de notre race." <sup>1</sup>

The prophets, from Amos to Isaiah, had postulated a moral and social regeneration of the Jewish nation. The lowly and oppressed should find justice, an end should be made to the exploitation of the weak by the temporal and spiritual rulers. The prophetic demands were codified in a law discovered in the temple and ascribed to Moses. An attempt of a serious social reform had thus been made. The contradiction between stern reality and materialism and the moral and social programme of the prophets was great. The suffering of the masses, oppressed by the "brigands on the Tiber" <sup>2</sup> and the capitalists at home, cried for justice. The prophets, however, had placed the class-struggle upon an ethical basis. Jesus continued it, but instead of being inspired by the proud and torrential wrath of a Jeremiah or an Isaiah, He was influenced by the tender gentleness of Hillel. His teaching was the resurrection of the prophets. All this has been misunderstood, because it was not in the interests of Rome to understand it. The Aryan world had accepted Judaism in the teachings of Jesus, and so this teaching had to be dejudaised, although there remained nothing of the Christianity of the founder.

To awake man from his sleep, to make him conscious of his individual dignity, that he is part of the cosmos, of the great cause of God, was the keynote of the social teaching of the Hebrew prophets. This teaching, as

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by A. Le Gras, *Le Sionisme*, Genève, 1905, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Bouck White, *The Call of the Carpenter*.



## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

may be gathered from the Galilean and Jewish elements of the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus continued. But it is absolutely erroneous to maintain that he intended to abolish the Mosaic Law and the Levitic prescriptions, for He declared categorically in Matt. v. 17 :

“ Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets ; I came not to destroy but to fulfil.”

He had no intention of founding a new religion, but of purifying the old. It is clear, wrote Reimarus,<sup>1</sup> that Jesus had no intention whatever to abolish the Jewish religion and to introduce a new religion in its stead.

“ The Sermon on the Mount,”<sup>2</sup> writes Edward Carpenter, “ which, with the Lord’s Prayer embedded in it, forms the great and accepted repository of Christian teaching, is well known to be a collection of sayings from the pre-Christian writings, including the Psalms, Isaiah, Ecclesiasticus, the Secrets of Enoch, the Shmonehesreh,<sup>3</sup> and others.”

According to Matt. v. 18, it is clear that Jesus did not break with the law, but stood in it. His only innovation was the addition of deeper morality to the justice of the law and a belief in the coming *civitas Dei*. But this deeper morality does not stand in contradiction to the law, it does not abolish it, for to Jesus it is a development of the old law. He always based Himself upon the law. Nay, Jesus even shared the Jewish spirit of exclusion and aloofness, of which Jews are often being accused, and He forbade His disciples to preach the Gospel to the heathen.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger*, herausgegeben von G. E. Lessing, 1778.

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter, loc. cit., p. 213.

<sup>3</sup> Shmonehesreh is not a book of prayers, as Carpenter seems to imagine it, but a prayer.

<sup>4</sup> H. S. Reimarus, loc. cit., p. 132.

The Supper was simply the Passover meal. Passover is celebrated in memory of the liberation of the Jews from industrial slavery in Egypt. Jesus' own intention to liberate suffering humanity from economic and moral bondage was a continuation of the work of liberation.

There are no mysteries in this Passover supper. The Jewish father distributes the unleavened bread as the bread of poverty, the bread eaten when the Jews in Egypt had burst the bonds of slavery. The baptism, too, was based upon an old Jewish custom, which consisted in washing the body before a great solemnity. Thus Israel cleaned itself before Sinai. The baptism of John was symbolical, as preparation for a moral regeneration.

There was, therefore, no fundamental change between the religious practices of Jesus and the Judaism of His times. To take man out of his selfishness and to awake in him the consciousness of being a part of an eternal cosmos, of the Heavenly Father, of an eternal humanity and an eternal God, was not opposed to Judaism. Neither was the cry for justice opposed to the teaching of the Old Testament and of the prophets. But it was Rome which made Jesus transcendental, so as to eliminate and obliterate both the Jewish origin of the Saviour and His democratic and proletarian teaching—facts which are insisted upon in the Galilean elements of the Synoptic Gospels. It was capitalist Rome that changed the prophetic spirit of Jesus into a Holy Ghost. When men now speak of Christian morals as something diametrically opposed to Judaism, they show an absolute ignorance of both Judaism and the real teaching of Christ. I can only reply: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are saying."



## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

Jesus observed not only the Mosaic Law, but also the later additional prescriptions which, He insisted, should be complemented with moral duties. But whilst the old prophets had only nationalised their social and ethical teaching, although here and there we meet a note of universalism, Jesus laid stress upon this universalism. He continued, however, the work of the old prophets *in placing the idea of social reform and of democracy upon the rockbed of ethics*. That is where the prophets of Israel and Jesus differ so completely from all modern social reformers and democrats. The prophets had urged a return to the Old Testament, its social justice and democratic principles. Jesus laid stress particularly upon the individualistic note in the Old Testament. The *logia* of Christ are full of the dignity of the individual. A man is not only (as for Aristotle, or even Plato) the statesman, the scholar, the intellectual producer, but even the lowest labourer. There are hints in these *logia* preserved in the Gospel of Matthew concerning the manner in which everyone will best be able to serve the future *civitas Dei*: the Kingdom of God. There are references to the hire of the labourer; debts and borrowing. Jesus simply extended the democratic idea of the prophets, the plea for the labourer and the proletarian, and insisted upon the spiritual and idealistic basis. There is thus a continuity in those elements of the Synoptic Gospels which emanate from the Founder of Christianity and the teaching of the prophets. When even Renan<sup>1</sup> says that Jesus brought about a disruption, he is decidedly wrong. The mission of Christ was both social and religious, social more, perhaps, than religious. In the Gospel of Mark the social side is subordinate to the religious and metaphysical. It contains no

<sup>1</sup> Renan, *Life of Jesus*.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
 genealogy. But both Matthew and Luke lay stress upon the social teaching. In Matthew it is the attack upon the hierarchy, in Luke the attack upon capitalism. In Luke the proletariat, the labouring class is already represented as victorious. It is Luke who gives the *Magnificat* which has been called the "Marseillaise of the Proletariat."<sup>1</sup>

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
 For He hath looked upon the low estate of His handmaiden.  
 For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.  
 For He that is mighty has done to me great things;  
 And holy is His name.  
 And His mercy is unto generations and generations  
 On them that fear Him.  
 He hath shewed strength with his arm;  
 He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.  
 He hath put down princes from their thrones,  
 And has exalted them of low degree.  
 The hungry He has filled with good things.  
 And the rich He hath sent empty away."<sup>2</sup>

The Gospel of Luke (ch. ii.) starts with a description of the tax ordained by Augustus, when Quirinus was governor of Syria. Holzmann, Renan, and others<sup>3</sup> have pointed out that such a tax could not have been commanded for Judæa before she had become a Roman province; i.e. not under Herod the Great. But Luke made no mistake. There is a deep meaning in his first sentence. He connects the whole history and teaching of the Saviour with this fact. Luke, the Jew, knew what it meant—*Dai lakkkima birmisa*, or *Sapienti sat*. It is a hint that the teaching of his Master was democratic and had a tinge of opposition to the system of exploitation practised by capitalistic Rome. The beginning sentence is in accord with the

<sup>1</sup> Bouck White, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Luke i. 46-53.

<sup>3</sup> Renan, loc. cit.

## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

democratic tendencies of Luke. Luke did not pretend to consider this statement as an historical date, but simply as a motto for his description. It gives in a nutshell the tendency of his Master. For Judæa, and especially industrial Galilee, was the incarnation, the personification of that spirit of democracy which was diametrically opposed to the spirit of exploitation of Rome. It was in Galilee that the social democratic gospel of the prophets had found a ready soil. The description of Galilee will give the reader some idea of the country where Jesus was born, of the *milieu* in which He lived. He will understand why this hardy folk always resisted oppression and were imbued with a spirit of simplicity, equality, and social democracy. They were near nature and near the Creator and His Glory.

“Now Phœnicia and Syria,” writes Josephus, “encompass about the Galilees, which are two, and called the Upper Galilee and the Lower. They are bounded toward the sun-setting with the borders of the territory belonging to Ptolemais, and by Carmel; which mountain formerly belonged to the Galileans, but now belonged to the Tyrians; to which mountain adjoins Gaba, which is called the City of Horsemen, because those horsemen that were dismissed by Herod the king dwelt therein; they are bounded on the south with Samaria and Scythopolis, as far as the River Jordan; on the east with Hippene and Gadaris, and also with Gaulanitis, and the borders of the kingdom of Agrippa; its northern parts are bounded by Tyre, and the country of the Tyrians. As for that Galilee which is called the Lower, it extends in length from Tiberius to Zabulon, and of the maritime places, Ptolemais is its neighbour; its breadth is from the village called Zalloth, which lies in the great plain, as far as Bersabe,

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

from which beginning also is taken the breadth of the Upper Galilee, as far as the village Baca, which divides the land of the Tyrians from it ; its length is also from Meroth to Thella, a village near to Jordan.

“ These two Galilees, of so great largeness, and encompassed with so many nations of foreigners, have always been able to make a strong resistance on all occasions of war ; for the Galileans are inured to war from their infancy, and have been always very numerous ; nor hath the country been ever destitute of men of courage, or wanted a numerous set of them ; for their soil is universally rich and fruitful, and full of the plantations of trees of all sorts, insomuch that it invites the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation, by its fruitfulness : accordingly, it is all cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle. Moreover, the cities lie here very thick ; and the very many villages there are here, are everywhere so full of people, by the richness of their soil, that the very least of them contain above fifteen thousand inhabitants.

“ In short, if anyone will suppose that Galilee is inferior to Perea in magnitude, he will be obliged to prefer it before it in its strength ; for this is all capable of cultivation, is everywhere fruitful ; but for Perea, which is indeed much larger in extent, the greater part of it is desert, and rough, and much less disposed for the production of the milder kinds of fruits : yet hath it a moist soil (in other parts) and produces all kinds of fruits, and its plains are planted with trees of all sorts, while yet the olive-tree, the vine, and the palm-tree, are chiefly cultivated there. It is also sufficiently watered when torrents fail them, as they do in the dog-days.” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Josephus (Whiston), *Wars*, ch. iii.



## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

As for the Kingdom of Heaven, or of God, Jesus never explains it, because His audience of Jews knew what He meant. Does He not say : " It is given to you to understand." It was meant in a Jewish sense. For Jesus stood entirely in the Jewish religion, the religion of the prophets. His innovation consisted in His announcement that this Kingdom of God, the expectation of which was in the hearts of thousands, would soon be realised, if they had faith—faith in God and faith in themselves. Humanity, suffering humanity, would indeed be redeemed if it coupled self-reliance with faith in the Eternal. But, unfortunately, modern leaders of the masses whom they wish to redeem separate the two ideas. They frequently eliminate faith in the Eternal from their movements and retain only the self-reliance. They forget that religion is a powerful lever. Christ inspired His hearers with a feeling of self-reliance ; He advised them to act, but He also urged them to have faith. When He tells His hearers not to be anxious either about food or raiment : " Consider the lilies in the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin,"<sup>1</sup> He means simply that they should have faith in God. But He also urged them to act : " Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ! "<sup>2</sup>

As a native of Galilee, Jesus was opposed both to capitalism and to militarism. Capital and militarism belong to each other and are inseparable as light and shadow. As a preacher of the gospel of labour and of democracy, He was opposed to capitalism and exploitation and to Cæsar, who was the incarnation of both. The famous answer which Jesus gave : " Render unto

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 7.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

Cæsar . . . " <sup>1</sup> may be an interpolation, but if read in the context is quite clear. They wanted to ensnare Him in His talk, and He perceived their wickedness. His answer was therefore, partly ironical, and partly symbolical. He was not ignorant, as has been suggested by Renan and others, of the political and economical state of Rome and especially of Judæa. If the Prophets show a clear knowledge of political and economic circumstances, there is no valid reason to warrant the opinion that the Carpenter of Nazareth was more ignorant than the shepherd of Tekoa. No, Jesus had a clear conception of the social and economic state of His time, He was well acquainted with what is now called the process of concentration. He knew that in consequence of the concentration of capital in the hands of a few, the masses, the multitude as they are styled in the Gospels, are doomed to poverty. The rich became richer and the poor poorer. "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." <sup>2</sup>

There is, however, a vast difference between our modern proletarian and labour movements and the social democracy preached by the prophets of Israel and by the Galilean. Modern labour and proletarian leaders are under the influence of the material conception of history. They also believe that hatred and competition would make way to fraternity and love, and would follow in the wake of an amelioration of economic life. The social reformers and democratic leaders of Israel were convinced, on the contrary, that the economic amelioration would be the effect not the cause of the brotherhood of man. If men turned into

<sup>1</sup> "Then says He unto them, Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matt. xxii. 21).

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 12.



## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

themselves, reflected, repented, and learned to love each other, then suffering would gradually disappear. Thus, in Jesus' social democracy, economics are subject to idealism and morals, whilst in the modern socialism they are subject to materialism and to iron laws. If Jesus and the prophets have not been successful, it is because men have not accepted their advice, and not because these great social reformers misjudged the connection between cause and effect. But modern democracy has also failed, and will always fail if it puts the cart before the horse, if it turns effect into cause and cause into effect. Without idealism and morality the materialism and iron law will never make man happy. It may only rearrange the social order, i.e. make the oppressed and downtrodden of yesterday the rulers and oppressors of to-day, introduce in the place of a dictatorship of the capitalistic classes a dictatorship of the proletariat, with the result that proletarians will in course of time become bourgeois and exploiters, and the former capitalists will be working-men and exploited.

It has been pointed out and is insisted upon by many writers that Christ had a contempt for labour.<sup>1</sup> This, however, is erroneous.<sup>2</sup> Christ was not against labour, an idea which Schweitzer insists upon, but He wished to redeem man from that suffering of toil and labour which is the result of the antagonism of Capital and Labour. By preaching a social democracy He wished to redeem man from the consequences of greed, selfishness, vanity, ambition, and love of domination : He wished to lower the high and mighty, but not to establish class-rule. He told the multitudes, the poor and proletarians that they were ' the salt of the earth,'

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, loc. cit; Malon, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> See Rauschenbusch, loc. cit.



LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
'the light of the world.' They would inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, the *civitas Dei*; but He warned them in the same breath to be merciful to their former oppressors.<sup>1</sup> He wanted to bring man back to solidarity, sanity, and a conception of true social democracy, which means the fellowship of society. "For true democracy," says Carpenter,<sup>2</sup> "is the rehabilitation of the whole of society in one fellowship."

If, however, it is quite certain that Jesus was a social reformer, and criticised the economic abuses then prevalent in the mighty Roman Empire, He was not a social reformer in the ordinary sense of the word. The assertion that He was the first communist of antiquity and the father of modern communism, an argument which some Christian Socialists are in the habit of using, is erroneous. Nothing was farther from His mind than a redistribution of wealth or a communistic state of society. He attacked and criticised social injustice, economic abuses, oppression, but His gospel was a gospel of consolation and not of social revolution. It was to a certain extent a gospel of social democracy, not in the sense of the modern German party, but in the sense of a democratisation of society. That, indeed, is the real meaning of social democracy, as distinguished from political and industrial democracy. Jesus preached contempt of wealth, but not its abolition. To abolish private property was not His intention, nor has He anywhere recommended community of property. He gave to the tendencies and desires for social reforms a religious basis. His aim was to solve the social question by religious feeling and the regeneration of man; by love and brotherhood of men.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 13, 14, 22; Luke vi. 20, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter, loc. cit., p. 255.

## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

He had no intention whatever to introduce either communism of property or a dictatorship of the proletariat, but He preached a gospel of labour. He loved the working-man, and only he who toiled had a right to the fruits of labour. What He intended was to fuse into one sociology economics and religion, politics and morality. Unfortunately, the gentle democrat of Nazareth, with a vast intellect and a large heart, has been represented either as an innocent but ignorant martyr, or as a son of a Divinity frequently unjust and arbitrary. The Son of a God, omniscient and omnipotent, who has created billions of human beings for the sole purpose of delivering them subsequently to terrible torture in the flames, not for any sins of their own, but because such is His pleasure, is an idea which we cannot accept.

His doctrine of democracy, and of revolt against injustice, that spirit of revolt which Jesus had taken over from the prophets, has been turned into one of submissiveness, whilst Christ has been represented as an upholder of Cæsarism. The proletarian Galilean disciples of the Master revolted against the doctrine of submission,<sup>1</sup> but the idea became triumphant, because it was in the interest of Rome of the Cæsars to make it so. The great German historian, Ranke, attached very great importance to the sentence: "Render unto Cæsar what is Cæsar's." Of all the magnificent words heard from Jesus Christus, none is more important than the injunction to render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's and to God what is God's.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Malon, *Le Socialisme Integral*, vol. i, p. 220. When Malon, however, says that Jesus condemned work as a terrestrial occupation, he repeats a common erroneous statement; *ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Weltgeschichte*, vol. iii, p. 160.

## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

And even the fathers of the Church frequently re-echo the Galilean teaching of the Master. They were aware of the contradictions which existed between the Galilean and Jewish elements of Christianity and the Roman elements. The Master had preached equality of men ; He had exalted the poor and the lowly. Accordingly, the downtrodden and the oppressed ought to be free—the slaves ought to be liberated. And yet—such was not the case. Christianity has been accused of not having set free the slaves. I admit that it alleviated their sufferings, both morally and physically, but it did not insist upon the abolition of slavery. For centuries, in spite of Christianity, men were slaves, serfs, and compulsory labourers. The contradictions had already occurred to St. Augustine, and he endeavoured to reconcile them.

St. Augustine explains this anomaly, this apparent contradiction, most clearly ; and it was he who founded the theory which persisted through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance until the seventeenth century. " Government," says St. Augustine, " is a service rendered to those who are governed : it is in the interests of those who are ruled. God wished man to command the beasts, but He did not wish man to dominate his fellow-men. But the order of nature has been reversed by sin, and it is just that the yoke of servitude should be imposed upon man. It was the punishment of sin and not the result of nature. In the natural state in which God created man no one was the slave either of man or of sin ; slavery, therefore, is a punishment. That is the reason why the apostle warns the slaves to obey their masters, and to serve them faithfully, so that if they cannot be freed, they should at least find freedom in servitude, in serving



## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

not in fear, but in love, until the day when iniquity will disappear and human domination will no longer exist, the day when God will be all in all.”<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine thus makes it clear that slavery is unjust in the natural state. Aristotle had justified it. As a result of sin, however, it is justified. Whilst Aristotle had discovered the principle of slavery and of human inequality in the law of nature, St. Augustine discovers it in the law of sin. Whilst some were of opinion that Christianity did not attack slavery because it did not intend to preach a social revolution, St. Augustine maintains that it is only natural as a result of sin. Dominion of one man over another will disappear when iniquity will pass away and human dominion destroyed. But as long as the present society exists, it is justified, and when will the present society disappear? In the city of God. Thus St. Augustine, like Aristotle, was in favour of the inequality of man.

The other fathers of the Church had also been aware of the contradictions introduced through the influence of Rome into primitive Christianity, and they often re-echo the distant cry which had resounded in Galilee. Hence we find here and there democratic and proletarian sentiments expressed in the writings of the fathers of the Church. Some are even tinged with a distinct communistic thought :

“Opulence is always the product of a theft, if not by the actual possessor, by his ancestors,” said St. Jerome. St. Ambrosius not only inveighs against the rich and social injustice, but he clearly preaches communism when he says : “Nature created community ; private property is the offspring of usurpation.” And St. Clement expresses a similar view, when he says : “In strict justice, everything should

<sup>1</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, i, xix, 14, 15.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
belong to all. Iniquity alone has created private property."

The Holy Hieronymous writes, "Superfluous possession is robbery against the community, and if this robbery has not been committed by the present possessors, the crime was committed by one of his ancestors."<sup>1</sup>

St. Clemens, St. Basilius, and St. Chrysostomus expressed similar sentiments. By rights there ought to be no private property, but everything ought to belong to everybody. Private property is the source of inequalities, and St. Basilius preceded Proudhon when he said: "The rich man is a thief." St. Chrysostomus is of opinion that "the rich man is a robber"; a certain equality of possession ought to be arranged in such a way that the rich should give from his superfluity to the needy. The best means would be a community of possession.

St. Ambrosius is of opinion that private property is usurpation. "The earth has been given to all, rich and poor; why do you alone usurp property?" Gregorius of Nyssa says: "As we are all brothers by the bonds of blood and of nature, it would be better and more just if we distributed wealth in equal portions." From this it has been argued by Socialist writers that the Fathers of the Church evidently praised Communism as an ideal state of society. Authoritative Church historians, however, are all of opinion that it was only a *pium desideratum*, a dream, the realisation of which the Church Fathers never contemplated nor expected.

Officially Christianity did not preach communism. It considered it as Christian perfection and as a

<sup>1</sup> Laveleye, loc. cit., p. xvii; Malon, loc. cit., chap. iv, p. 97; Thonissen, *Historie du Socialisme*, vol. ii, p. 90.

## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

Christian ideal to deprive oneself of earthly possessions, voluntarily, but it never said that it was a social injustice to possess. Communism—and there were communistic tendencies in the early Church—was simply a voluntary act, based upon Christian charity and benevolence, but never a principle of social and economic justice. Officially, when Christianity was established in Rome, it maintained that wealth and poverty were necessary institutions in the cosmos, so as to give an opportunity to the rich to practise charity, and to the poor to develop the virtue of patience. It made a distinction between Divine and human law, and insisted upon the perfect equality of men before God, but upon the distinctions in human society. *The outbursts against the rich and exploiters, against the usurpers, were simply an echo of the primitive Galilean teaching.*

Thus the Fathers of the Church maintain everywhere that men are sons of one Father, that their Father in spirit is the same God, and that men have been fashioned from the same clay.<sup>1</sup>

But this doctrine of democracy and of social equality was only spiritual. The Church Fathers had no intention of really introducing a social democracy, a social equality of men, for they were under the influence of Rome, of Capitalism and of Cæsarism. The Stoics, too, had preached an equality of men, but it was a moral equality they had in view. Equally St. Paul and the Church Fathers had only a spiritual and religious equality in mind, and not a civil, economic, industrial, or political. Seneca told the master to treat his slaves well and humanely, to treat the latter as he would wish to be treated himself.<sup>2</sup> St. Paul, too, and the Apostles maintain that all men are equal, but they also

<sup>1</sup> Janet, loc. cit., pp. 291-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistola ad Lucil*, p. 73.



## LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY

enjoin upon the slave that he should obey his master. In Jesus, they taught, all men are equal ; but in reality there are masters and slaves.

To sum up : The social message of Christianity, as preached by its Founder, was a continuation of the teaching of the Hebrew prophets. It was a cry for justice, social and economic. Christ insisted upon the dignity of Labour, the democratisation of society and thorough social reforms, but He never preached the abolition of private property, or the introduction of class rule and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Like His predecessors, the prophets of Israel, He gave a religious basis to His plans for social reform. His economics, just as the economics of the prophets of Israel, were subject to idealism and morals. He wished to solve the social question by the regeneration of man, by altruism, and the brotherhood of man. Under the influence of Rome, however, of Capitalism and Cæsarism, primitive Christianity developed into a doctrine of submissiveness and transcendentalism on the one hand, and of autocracy and persecution on the other.

The prophets of Israel have been betrayed by Jews, and Christ has been betrayed by Christians. Jews read portions of the Prophets in their synagogues, but in daily life they often forget the social messages of Amos, Micah, and Isaiah. Christians repeat the Lord's Prayer for the giving of our daily bread, but they ignore Christ's social message in politics and in economics. At the best they apply the " giving of daily bread " to charity and not to the wages of Labour.

From time to time, however, efforts have been made in the course of centuries to return to the social doctrines of the prophets of Israel, and of primitive

## THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity. And whenever true social prophets and honest social reformers have arisen, preaching the Gospel of Labour and of the democratisation of society, they were always bound to turn for inspiration to the Hebrew prophets and to the Galilean teaching of the real Christ. They invariably tried to fuse into one sociology and religion, politics and morals. But whenever we see labour-leaders and champions of the proletariat who despise or persecute religion, talking solely of "iron laws," "economic determinism," or materialism, but not of the regeneration of man, we may be sure that they are false prophets. As long as modern social saviours, preaching from their "Pisgah-heights" the Gospel of Labour, of Democracy, and of Social Reform, are only swayed by vulgar ambition and greed, by the "Will to Power" and a puerile desire to command their fellow men,<sup>1</sup> humanity will never be saved, either socially or economically. It will never enter the Canaan of social and economic justice. The promised kingdoms of Bolshevism, Communism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat are neither in heaven nor upon earth, but somewhere else.

Social justice will be established not through hatred and class rule, but through the regeneration of man. A social revolution, if it is to benefit the proletariat and not its self-appointed leaders, should be the result of a moral revival, of a re-awakening of the religious conscience, and of a return to the social teaching of the prophets of Israel and of Jesus of Nazareth. And then there will no longer be any need for statesmen to sit and weep by the lakes of Switzerland when they remember the golden age of peace. For when the statesmen and the men in the street will "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before their God," when

<sup>1</sup> Comte, *Système de Philosophie positive*.

LABOUR, SOCIAL REFORM, AND DEMOCRACY  
they will be "meek, merciful, and pure of heart,"  
peace and prosperity, social and economic justice will  
reign supreme in this world. "And nation shall not  
lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn  
war any more"

THE END



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ADLER, GEORG, *Geschichte des Sozialismus und Kommunismus von Plato bis zur Gegenwart*, Leipzig, 1889.
- ADLER, GEORG, "Sozialreform im Altertum": *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften*, II Supplementbd., Jena, 1897.
- ALLEN, W. A. C., *Old Testament Prophets, a study in Personality*, Cambridge, 1919.
- AMITAI, L. K., *La Sociologie, selon la législation juive appliquée à l'époque moderne*, Paris, 1905.
- ANDRÉ, T., *L'Esclavage, chez les anciens Hébreux, étude d'archéologie biblique*, Paris, 1892.
- ANTONELLI, L., *La Démocratie sociale devant les idées présentes*, 1911.
- ARISTOTLE, *Politics*. (Engl. trns. by W. Ellis.)
- ARNOLD, G., *Kirchen-und Ketzer Geschichte*, 3 Bde, Schaffhausen, 1740-2.
- ARNOLD, MATTHEW, *Democracy (Mixed Essays)*, 1879.
- BÄCK, S., *Die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes und seine Litteratur vom babylonischen Exile bis auf die Gegenwart*, Frankfurt am Main, 1894.
- BALTZER, E., *Das Buch von der Arbeit*, Leipzig, 1879.
- BARKER, E., *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, 1906.
- BARKER, E., *Greek Political Theory: Plato and his Predecessors*, London, 1918.
- BARTHÉLEMY, S. H., *De la vraie démocratie*, Paris, 1849.
- BARTHÉLEMY, S. H., *Le Bouddhisme*, 1855.
- BATAULT, G., *Le Problème Juif*, 1921.
- BAUER, BRUNO, *Christus und die Zäsaren. Der Ursprung des Christentums aus dem römischen Griechentum*, Berlin, 1879.
- BAUER, BRUNO, *Das Urevangelium und die Gegner der Schrift: Christus und die Zäsaren*, Berlin, 1880.
- BLACKIE, J. S., *Democracy*, London, 1867.
- BLUNTSCHLI, J. C., *Altasiatische Gottes-und-Welt-Ideen*, Nördlingen, 1866.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BLUNTSCHLI, J. C., *Théorie générale de l'Etat*, Paris, 1891.
- BOSCH, J. M., *Die entwickelungs-theoretische Idee socialer Gerechtigkeit; eine Kritik und Ergänzung der Socialtheorie Herbert Spencers*, 1896.
- BORKENHAGEN, H., *Christus und die Sozialdemokratie*, Leipzig, 1897.
- BOUCTOT, J. G., *Histoire du communisme et du Socialisme*, Paris, 1889.
- BUSSY, DE, *Histoire et réfutation du socialisme depuis l'antiquité jusqu' à nos jours*, Paris, 1859.
- BRUDER, A., *Staatslexicon*, in 5 vols., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1889-97.
- BRYCE, J. LORD, *The American Commonwealth*, 3 vols., 1888.
- BRYCE, J. LORD, *The historical aspect of Democracy*, 1867.
- BÜCHER, C., *Arbeit und Rhythmus*, 1900.
- BÜCHER, C., *Die Aufstände der unfreien Arbeiter*, 143-129 v. Christ., Frankfurt am Main, 1874.
- BUHL, D. F., *Die Sozialen Verhältnisse der Israeliten*, Berlin, 1899.
- BÜSCHING, A. F., *Geschichte der jüdischen Religion oder des Gesetzes*, Berlin, 1779.
- BUTLER, N. M., *True and False Democracy*, 1907.
- BUTOW, O., *Die Weltordnung*, 3 vols., Braunschweig, 1895-1903.
- CAPEN, N., *History of Democracy*, 1874.
- CARPENTER, ED., *Towards Democracy*, 1881.
- CAUMONT, A., *Plan de Dieu, ou Physiologie du Travail*, Paris, 1862.
- CICCOTTI, ETTORE, *Il Tramonto della Schiavitù nel mondo antico*, Torino, 1899.
- CLAYTON, J., *The Rise of Democracy*, 1911.
- COGNETTI DE MARTIIS, *Socialismo antico*, Torino, 1889.
- COBBETT, W. (Peter Porcupine), *Democratic Principles*, 1798.
- COIT, STANTON (Editor), *Ethical Democracy*, Essays in Social Dynamics, London, 1900.
- CORRODY, H., *Kritische Geschichte d. Chiliasm*, 2 vols., 1781-3.
- CROISSET, A., *Les Démocraties antiques*, 1909.
- CROZIER, A. R., *Civilisation and Progress*, being the Outline of a New System of Political, Religious, and Social Philosophy, 1885.
- DARMSTETER, J., *Les prophètes d'Israël*, Paris, 1892.
- DARMSTETER, J., *The Zend Avesta*, Oxford, 1880-3.
- DELVAILLE, J., *Essai sur l'histoire de l' idée du Progrès, jusqu' à la fin du XVme Siècle*, Paris, 1910.
- DENIS, J., *Histoire des idées morales dans l'antiquité*, 2 vols., Paris.
- DEWEY, J., *The Ethics of Democracy*, 1886.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- DIEHL, *Zur Ethik des Stoikers Zenon*, Mainz, 1877.
- DÖRING, A., *Die Lehre des Socrates als Soziales Reformsystem*, München, 1895.
- DRUMANN, W., *Die Arbeiter und Kommunisten in Griechenland und Rom*, Königsberg, 1860.
- DÜMLER, F., *Prolegomena Zu Platons Staat*, Basel, 1891.
- DUNNING, W. A., *A History of Political Theories*, 1916.
- EICHTHAL, E. D', *Socialisme et problèmes sociaux*, 1899.
- ENGEL, A., *Grundriss der Sozialreform*, Paderborn, 1907.
- FARBSTEIN, D., *Das Recht des unfreien und freien Arbeiters nach jüdisch-talmudischem Recht*, Frankfurt am Main, 1896.
- FERGUSON, C., *The Religion of Democracy*, 1900.
- FOUCOU, F., *Histoire du Travail : la nature et l'homme*, Paris, 1868.
- FOUILLEÉ, A., *La démocratie, politique et sociale en France*, 1910.
- FOURNIÈRE, E. J., *L'Idéalisme social*, Paris, 1898.
- FOWLER, W. W., *The City State of the Greeks and Romans*, 1895.
- FREEMAN, E. A., *Athenian Democracy*, 1856.
- FRIEDLÄNDER, L., *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von August bis zum Ausgang der Antonine*, 3 Bde., Leipzig, 1881-2.
- FRIEDLÄNDER, L., *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Christentums*, Wien, 1894.
- GETTELL, R. G., *Introduction to Political Science*, 1910.
- GLOTZ, G., *Le Travail dans la Grèce ancienne, histoire économique de la Grèce*, Paris, 1920.
- GODKIN, E. L., *Unforeseen Tendencies of Democracy*, 1903.
- GOLDSTEIN, F., *Urchristentum und Sozialdemokratie*, Zürich, 1899.
- GOLLANCZ, H., *The Dignity of Labour, as taught in the Talmud*, Woking, 1891.
- GOMPERZ, TH., *Greek Thinkers*, 1896-1902.
- GRAETZ, H., *Geschichte der Juden*, 10 Bde., 1871-82.
- GRÜNBERG, C., "Sozialismus und Kommunismus" (in *Elster, Wörterbuch d. Volkswirtschaft*, vol. ii., Jena, 1898).
- GUIRAUD, P., *Études économiques sur l'antiquité*, Paris, 1905.
- GUIZOT, F., *La Démocratie en France*, 1849.
- GUYOT, YVES, *Études sur les doctrines sociales du Christianisme*, Paris, 1873.
- GUTHE, H., *Das Zukunftsbild des Jesaia*, Leipzig, 1885.
- HAMBURGER, J., *Realencyklopädie für Bibel und Talmud*, 5 vols., Strelitz, 1870-92.
- HARLEY, J. H., *The New Social Democracy*, 1911.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- HARTMANN, E. v., *Tagesfragen*, 1896.
- HARTMANN, E. v., *Die Socialen Kernfragen*, 1894.
- HATCH, E., *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, Edited by Fairbairn, 1890.
- HEARNSHAW, F. J. C., *Democracy at the Crossways*, 1918.
- HENNEBERT, A., *Histoire de la lutte entre les patriciens et les plébeiens à Rome*, Paris, 1845.
- HERKNER, H., *Die Arbeiterfrage, eine Einführung*, Berlin, 1908.
- HERODOTUS, *Historiarum libri ix*, 1824.
- HILDEBRAND, B., *Rückblick auf die geschichtliche Entwicklung der Sozialen Wirtschaftslehren: Nationalökonomie der Gegenwart und Zukunft*, Frankfurt am Main, 1848.
- HILGENFELD, AD., *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums*, Leipzig, 1884.
- HILGENFELD, AD., *Das Urchristentum in den Hauptwendepunkten seines Entwicklungsganges*, Jena, 1856.
- HOLTZMANN, H., *Die ersten Christen und die soziale Frage*, Frankfurt am Main, 1882.
- HOLTZMANN, O., *Das Ende des jüdischen Staatswesens und die Entstehung des Christentums*, Berlin, 1888.
- HOSMER, G. W., *People and Politics*, 1883.
- HUBER, JOH., "Sozialismus und Kommunismus" (in *Bluntschli u. Brater, Staatswörterbuch*, vol. xvi., Stuttgart, 1865).
- HUBER, JOH., *Der Sozialismus: Rückblick auf das Altertum*, München, 1895.
- HUNDESHAGEN, "Der Kommunismus und die asketische Sozialreform im Laufe der christlichen Jahrhunderte" (in *Theolog. Studien u. Krit.*, 1845).
- INGRAM, J. K., *A History of Slavery and Serfdom*, London, 1895.
- JAEGER, P., *Die menschliche Arbeitskraft*, 1878.
- JANET, PAUL, *Histoire de la science politique dans ses rapports avec la morale*, 2 vols., Paris, 1887.
- JANET, PAUL, *Les origines du Socialisme contemporain*, 1878.
- JANNET, C., *Les institutions Sociales de Sparte*, Paris, 1873.
- JONES, J., *The Book of the Prophet Jesaiah*, Oxford, 1830.
- KAUTSKY, K., *Die Entstehung des Christentums*, Jena, 1908.
- KAUTSKY, K., "Die Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus" (in *Geschichte des Sozialismus in Einzeldarstellungen*, vol. i., Stuttgart, 1895).
- KIRCHMANN, P. F., *Geschichte der Arbeit und Cultur*, 1855.
- NOBEL, A., *Der Prophet Jesaia*, Leipzig, 1854.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- KNOBEL, A., *Der Prophetismus der Hebräer*, 2 vols., 1837.  
 KÖHLER, H., *Sozialistische Irrlehren von der Entstehung des Christentums u. ihre Widerlegung*, Leipzig, 1899.  
 KRETZSCHMAR, E., *Der Kampf des Plato um die religiösen und sittlichen Principien des Staatslebens*, Leipzig, 1852.  
 KÜBEL, F. E., *Die sociale und volkswirtschaftliche Gesetzgebung des alten Testaments*, 1876.  
 LAFARGUE, P., *Le droit à la paresse*, 1900.  
 LAMARZELLE, G. DE, *Démocratie politique, démocratie sociale, démocratie chrétienne*, Paris, 1907.  
 LANGE, F. A., *Die Arbeiterfrage in ihrer Bedeutung für Gegenwart und Zukunft beleuchtet*, 1879.  
 LAU, TH., *Die Gracchen und ihre Zeit*, Hamburg, 1854.  
 LAURENT, F., *Histoire de l'humanité*, 18 vols., Paris, 1860-70.  
 LAVELEYE, E. DE., *The Socialism of To-day*, London.  
 LAVELEYE, E. DE., *Le gouvernement dans la démocratie*, 2 vols., 1891.  
 LAZARE, B., *L'antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes*, Paris, 1894.  
 LECKY, W. E. H., *Democracy and Liberty*, 2 vols., 1896.  
 LETOURNEAU, CH., *L'Évolution de l'Esclavage*, Paris, 1897.  
 LEVASSEUR, E., *Histoire des classes ouvrières en France, depuis la conquête de Jules César jusqu' à la Révolution*, 2 vols., Paris, 1859.  
 LIESSE, A., *Le Travail aux points de vue scientifique, industriel et social*, Paris, 1899.  
 LOUIS, PAUL, *Le Travail dans le monde Romain*, Paris, 1912.  
 LUBLINSKY, S., *Die Entstehung des Christentums aus der antiken Kultur*, 2 vols., 1910.  
 MAINE, SIR H. S., *Popular Government*, 1885.  
 MALLOCK, W. H., *The Limits of Pure Democracy*, 1917.  
 MALON, B., *Le Socialisme Intégral*, 2 vols., 1892.  
 MALON, B., *Histoire du Socialisme*, Paris, 1882-4.  
 MAY, SIR T. E., *Democracy in Europe*, 2 vols., 1877.  
 MECKLIN, J. M., *An Introduction to Social Ethics*, London, 1920.  
 MELAMED, M. S., *Der Staat im Wandel der Jahrtausende, Studien Zur Gesch. des Staatsgedankens*, Stuttgart, 1910.  
 MEINHOLD, *Jesaia und seine Zeit*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1898.  
 MEYER, ED., *Die Entstehung des Judentums, eine historische Untersuchung*, Halle, 1896.  
 MEYER, ED., *Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Altertums*, Jena, 1895.  
 MEYER, ED., *Die Sklaverei im Altertum*, 1898.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- MEYER, ED., *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Gracchen*, 1894.
- MEYER, R., *Der Emancipations Kampf des vierten Standes*.
- MICHAELIS, T. D., *Mosaïsches Recht*, 6 vols., Frankfurt am Main 1770-5.
- MOHL, R. V., *Encyclopedie der Staatswissenschaften*.
- MOMMSEN, TH., *Römische Geschichte*, 4 vols., Berlin, 1881-5.
- MONY, *Études sur le travail*, 2 vols., 1877.
- MONTESQUIEU, BARON, *Esprit des Lois*, 1748.
- MOST, J., *Die Sozialen Bewegungen im alten Rom und der Cäsarismus*, Berlin, 1878.
- MULLER-LYER, P., *Phasen der Kultur, und Richtungslinien des Fortschritts, Soziologische Ueberblicke*, München, 1908.
- NICKEL, J., *Sozialpolitik und Soziale Bewegung im Altertum*, Paderborn, 1892.
- NOHLE, *Die Staatslehre Plato's in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Jena, 1880.
- NOWACK, W., *Die Sozialen Probleme in Israel und deren Bedeutung für die religiöse Entwicklung dieses Volkes*, Strassburg, 1892.
- PAWLOVSKY, G. DE, *La Philosophie du Travail*, Paris, 1901.
- PESCH, H. S. T., *Liberalismus, Sozialismus und christliche Gesellschaftsordnung*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1896.
- PLATO, *Republic* (Translation of Davies and Vaughan, 1852).
- PLATT, *Democracy*, 1888.
- POEHLMANN, R., *Geschichte des antiken Kommunismus und Sozialismus*, 2 vols., 1893.
- QUACK, H. P. G., *De Socialisten, personen en stelsels*, 3 deelen, Amsterdam, 1875-92.
- RALIA, M., *L'Idée de Révolution dans les doctrines socialistes*, Paris, 1923.
- RAUSCHENBUSCH, W., *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 1913.
- REUSS, E., *Geschichte der heiligen Schriften des alten Testaments*, Braunschweig, 1890.
- RENAN, E., *Life of Jesus*.
- ROHDE, E., *Der griechische Roman*, 1900.
- ROSCHER, W., *System der Volkswirtschaft*, Stuttgart, 1912.
- SALVIONI, G., *Il comunismo nella Grecia antica*, Padua, 1883.
- SCHALL, E., *Die Staatsverfassung der Juden*, Leipzig, 1896.
- SCHEEL, H. v., *Sozialismus und Kommunismus*, Tübingen, 1896.
- SCHERER, E., *La démocratie de la France*, Paris, 1883.
- SCHOENMANN, G. F., *Athenian Constitutional History*, 1878.
- SCHOENMANN, G. F., *Popular Assemblies of the Athenians*, 1838.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- SCHUHL, M., *Sentences du Talmud*, 1888.
- SCHULZE, Chr. F., *Der Kampf der Demokratie und Aristokratie in Rom*, 1802.
- SIMON, J., *Le Travail*, 1866.
- SINGER, R., *Das Recht auf Arbeit*, 1895.
- SOMBART, W., *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben*, Leipzig, 1911.
- SOMBART, W., *Sozialismus und soziale Bewegung im 19ten Jahrhundert*, Jena, 1896.
- SOMERARD, E., *Histoire du Travail*, 1867.
- SOUCHON, AUG., *Les Théories économiques dans la Grèce antique*, Paris, 1898.
- SPENCER, H., *Social Statics*, 1856.
- STADE, B., *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 2 vols., Berlin, 1887.
- STAMM, F., *Geschichte der Arbeit*, 1871.
- STAMMHAMMER, J., *Bibliographie der Social-Politik*, 2 vols., Jena, 1897-1912.
- STEIN, L., *Die Soziale Frage im Lichte der Philosophie*, Stuttgart, 1897.
- STONE, G., *A History of Labour*, London, 1921.
- STOPEL, F., *Sociale Reform*, 1891.
- STRAUSS, D. F., *Reimarus*.
- SUMNER, W. G., *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*, 1884.
- THONISSEN, T. T., *Histoire du Socialisme dans l'antiquité*, 2 vols., Bruxelles, 1852.
- THUCYDIDES, *Historiæ*.
- TOCQUEVILLE, A. DE, *Democracy in America*, 4 vols., 1842.
- TWESTEN, *Die religiösen Ideen des alten Orients*, 1872.
- UHLHORN, G., *Die Christliche Liebesthätigkeit in der alten Kirche*, Stuttgart, 1882.
- VACHEROT, E., *La Démocratie libérale*, Paris, 1892.
- VILLEGARDELLE, *Histoire des idées sociales avant la Révolution Française, ou les Socialistes modernes devancés et dépassés par les anciens penseurs et philosophes*, Paris, 1846.
- VOGEL, T. L., *Altertümer der ersten und ältesten Christen*, Hamburg, 1780.
- WALLON, H., *Histoire de l'Esclavage dans l'antiquité*, Paris, 1847.
- WARD, C. O., *The Ancient Lowly*, 1886.
- WEBB, SIDNEY, *Towards Social Democracy*, 1916.
- WEINHOLD, *Geschichte der Arbeit*, 1869.
- WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, *Aristoteles und Athen*, 2 vols., Berlin, 1893.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

WILLOUGHBY, W. W., *Social Justice*, New York, 1900.

WOOLSEY, TH., *Communism and Socialism in their History and Theory*, London, 1879.

ZAHN, THEOD., *Skizzen aus dem Leben der alten Kirche*, Erlangen, 1894.

ZELLER, E., *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung dargestellt*, 3 vols., Leipzig, 1879-92.

ZIMMERN, A. E., *Greek Commonwealths*, 1911.

# INDEX

- Agrarian Problems, in Mosaic Code, 77  
 Agriculture, contempt for, at Rome, 244  
 —, despised by Teutons, 86  
 Amos, on social justice, 107 ff.  
 Apollos, contemporary of St. Paul, 281  
 Aristobulus, 281  
 Aristocracy, Régime of, in Greece, 147  
 Aristotle, 196 ff.  
 —, on Democracy, 198  
 —, his individualism, 203  
 Artisans, Socrates on, 176  
 Athens, Proletariat at, 156  
 —, Social Democracy at, 160  
 Awakening of the dead, 275  
  
 Bauer, Bruno, on Christianity, 267  
 Bible, glorification of labour in, 86  
 —, legislation of, 80  
*Book of Covenants*, the, 109  
 Brahmanism, laws of, 50  
 Bryce, on liberty and equality, 41  
 Bücher, on Labour, 25  
 Buddha, spiritual democracy of, 54  
 —, reforms of, 52  
  
 Capital, in Greece, 158  
 Capitalism, in Hebrew State, 97  
 —, opposed by Jesus, 301  
 Castes, system of, in Greece, 161  
 —, —, in India, 51  
 Cicero, his criticism of social reform, 258  
 —, on merchants, 249  
*Civitas Dei*, 286, 295  
 Charity, Rabbis on, 141  
 China, realism of, 57  
 —, Social Democracy in, 57  
 Christian Church, early, Communism of, 309  
 Christian Socialism, 271, 276  
  
 Christianity, without Christ, 267  
 —, and Communism, 276  
 —, and Judaism, 293  
 —, Judæo-Galilean elements in, 279, 283  
 —, and spirit of resignation, 287  
 —, as changed by St. Paul, 283  
 Chrysippus, on rational law, 224  
 Church, Fathers of the, 305  
 Cynics, the, on equality, 221  
 —, social philosophy of, 222  
 Class rule, Christ opposed to, 311  
 Class war, 32, 43  
 Cleon, 154  
*Coloni*, the, at Rome, 243  
 Commerce, in Greece, 158  
 —, in Hebrew State, 95  
 Communism and Christianity, 276  
 —, of early Christian Church, 309  
 —, of the Essenes, 117, 125  
 —, Jewish spirit opposed to, 79  
 —, in Mosaic Code, 78  
 —, of Plato, 195, 204  
 —, prophets opposed to, 116  
 —, in Sparta, 159  
 Comte, on first social laws, 39  
 Confucius, laws of, 59  
 —, political democracy of, 60  
*Covenants*, the *Book of*, 109  
  
 Darmsteter, on prophetism, 101  
 Dead, the awakening of the, 275  
 Democracy, Aristotle on, 198  
 —, Plato's ideas on, 185  
 —, in Russia, 43  
 —, political, demand for in Greece, 165  
 —, of Zeno, 232  
 —, Social, 40, 44  
 —, —, in Athens, 160  
 —, —, in China, 57  
 —, —, in Galilee, 299  
 —, —, of Jesus, 296, 303  
 —, —, in Jewish State, 71, 91  
 —, —, Socrates on, 170



# INDEX

- Dictatorship of Proletariat, 43  
 —, Jesus opposed to, 305  
 —, Moses opposed to, 92  
 Dignity of Labour, in Zend-Avesta, 62  
 Dikaarch of Menana, 163  
 Domestics, 28
- Egyptians, despise Labour, 19  
 Employed, privileges of, in Bible, 89  
 Employer, duties of, in Bible, 88  
 —, —, in Talmud, 139  
 Epicureans, their politics, 222  
 Equality, 41, 44  
 —, Cynics on, 221  
 —, Stoics on, 227  
 —, economic, in Jewish State, 91  
 —, Gospel of, in India, 53  
 —, Social, of Church Fathers, 309  
 —, in Mosaic Code, 77  
 Essenes, Communism of, 116, 125  
 Exploitation, human, 32
- Galilee, Social Democracy in, 299  
 Gospels, contradiction in, 277, 291  
 —, Judæo-Galilean elements in, 279  
 Government, St. Augustine, on, 306  
 Gracchi, the, social reforms of, 248, 255  
 Greece, capital in, 158  
 —, master-morality in, 147  
 —, slavery in, 148  
 —, struggle against usury, 149
- Harnack, on Gospels, 271  
 Hearnshaw, on Social Democracy, 41  
 Hesiod, on Labour, 164  
 Homer, on Labour, 20  
*Horror laboris*, 24, 26  
 Houlda, prophethess, 110  
 Humanitarianism, unknown in Greece, 146  
 Hyperbolos, 154
- Idleness, not inherent in human nature, 26  
 Individualism, of Aristotle, 203  
 —, in Mosaic Code, 79  
 —, of Spencer, 203  
 Isaiah, on social justice, 105 ff.
- Jabne, Academy of, 136  
 Jeremiah, labour leader of antiquity, 113  
 —, on Social justice, 105 ff.
- Jesus, democratic teaching of, 292, 296  
 —, dictatorship of proletariat, his opposition to, 305  
 —, historicity of, 263, 265, 291  
 —, Nordau on moral teaching of, 293  
 —, parents of, 264  
 —, as successor of Hebrew Prophets, 292  
 —, religious practices of, 295, 296  
 —, Social reforms of, 268, 297, 304  
 —, His Spirit of revolt, 305  
 Jewish legislation, superiority of, 88  
 Jewish State, Montesquieu on, 68  
 —, a *nomocracy*, 69  
 —, slavery in, 82  
 Joiakim, King, 112  
 Josephus, on Essenian teaching, 116  
 Josiah, King, 110  
 Jubile year, 71  
 Judaism, and Christianity, 293  
 Justice, cry for, 36  
 —, Nehemiah on, 114  
 —, Gospel of, in Mosaic Code, 92  
 —, Menander on, 230  
 —, Social, Amos on, 107 ff.  
 —, Isaiah on, 105 ff.  
 —, Jeremiah on, 105 ff.  
 —, in Old Testament, 70  
 —, Rabbis, 141
- Kalthoff, on historicity of Jesus, 265  
 Kingdom of Heaven, 272  
 Kshatriya, the, 50
- Labour, aspects of, 22  
 —, Bücher on, 25  
 —, conception of, 20  
 —, —, in Talmud, 133  
 —, definition of, 19  
 —, dignity of, insisted upon by Jesus, 293, 310  
 —, in Talmud, 137, 138  
 —, in Zend-Avesta, 62  
 —, economic aspect, 21  
 —, in Egypt, 19, 86  
 —, etymology of, 27  
 —, glorification of, in Bible, 86  
 —, Hesiod on, 164  
 —, Homer on, 22  
 —, Lycurgus on, 86  
 —, in Roman Empire, 251  
 —, sources of, in Greece, 150  
 —, sympathy with, among Jews, 90  
 Labour legislation, in Mosaic Code, 71  
 —, in Talmud, 135

# INDEX

Labour Party, in Jewish State, 112  
 Labourer, The, in Jewish law, 89  
 —, in Roman Law, 89  
 Law, Social, 39  
 Laws, The, of Plato, 189  
 Laziness, man inclined to, 23, 25  
 —, Talmud, on, 137  
 Legislation, Jewish, 88  
 Liberty, 41, 44  
 Lord's Prayer, The, 295  
 Lyncurgus, on Labour, 86

*Magnificat*, The, 298  
 Maimonides, on prophetism, 99  
 Manu, Laws of, 51  
 "Marseillaise, The, of the Proletariat," 298  
*Memorabilia*, The, of Xenophon, 171  
 Menander, on justice, 230  
 Mencius, laws of, 61  
 Merchants, Cicero's criticism of, 249  
 Militarism, Jesus opposed to, 301  
 Montesquieu, on Jewish State, 68  
 Morality, of Stoics, 223  
 Mosaic Code, agrarian problem in, 77  
 —, Communism in, 78  
 —, Labour legislation of, 71  
 Moses, Labour leader of antiquity, 91  
 —, statesmanship of, 80

Nehemiah, on cry for justice, 114  
*Nomocracy*, of the Jews, 69  
 Nordau, on moral teaching of Jesus, 293

*Pax Romana*, 284  
 Pauperism, at Rome, 259  
 Peabody, on Social reform of Jesus, 269  
 Pentateuch, opposed to Communism, 79  
 Phaleas of Chalcedon, 168  
 Plato, as philosopher, 192  
 —, on slavery, 187  
 —, Utopian ideas of, 190  
 Plutocracy, in Rome, 237  
 Poplarism, at Rome, 241  
 Prodicus, the Sophist, 171  
 Proletariat, at Athens, 156  
 —, at Rome, 259, 284  
 —, dictatorship of, 43  
 —, —, Jesus opposed to, 305  
 —, —, Moses opposed to, 92  
 Property, private, Fathers of Church on, 308  
 —, —, in Mosaic Code, 79  
 Prophetism, defined by Darmsteter, 101  
 —, —, Maimonides, 99

Prophets of Israel, The, 96, 98, 103

*Republic*, The, Plato's, 51  
 Resurrection, The, 275  
 Revolt, spirit of, among Jews, 305  
 Rich, the, criticism of, in Gospels, 274  
 Robbery, a title of nobility, 84  
 Rome, economic state of, 260

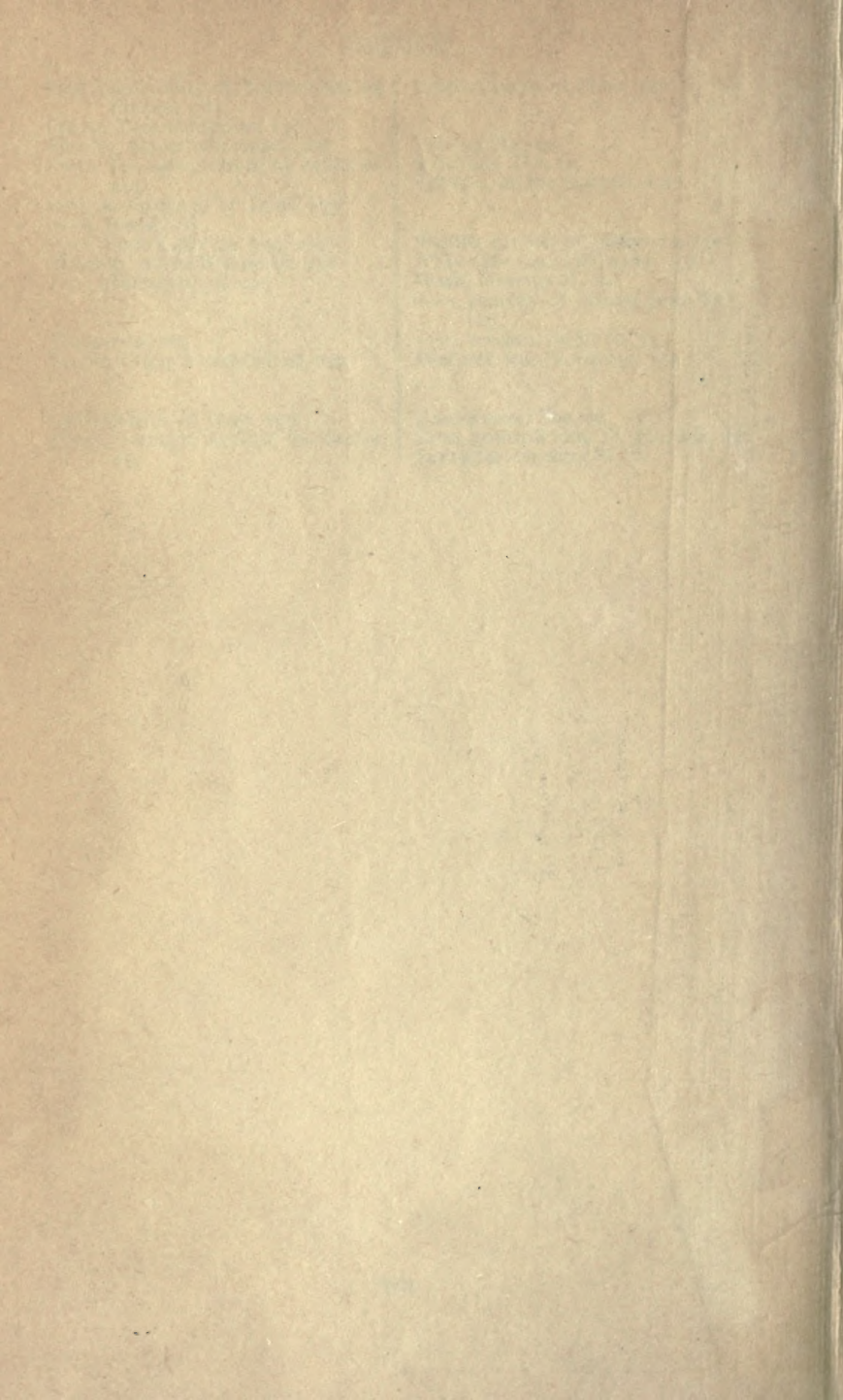
Saalschütz, on Hebrew State, 84  
 Sabbath, institution of, 85  
 St. Ambrosius, on private property, 308  
 St. Augustine, on Government, 306  
 St. Clemens, on private property, 308  
 Saul, King, democratic conduct, 96  
 Savages, labour among, 23  
 Self-reliance, taught by Jesus, 301  
 Sermon on the Mount, The, 298  
 Slavery, 28  
 —, Aristotle on, 206  
 —, in Greece, 148  
 —, among Hebrews, 81, 84  
 —, origin of, 81  
 —, Plato on, 187  
 —, Roman civilisation based upon, 241  
 —, Rousseau on, 83  
 —, Treitschke on, 31  
 Social Democracy, in China, 57  
 —, definition of, 40  
 —, in Jewish State, 91  
 Social equality, as taught by Fathers of Church, 309  
 —, in Mosaic Code, 77  
 Social philosophy, of Aristotle, 206  
 —, of Cynics, 222  
 Social justice, in India, 50  
 —, in Old Testament, 70  
 Social question, in the East, 49  
 Social Reform, in Book of Deuteronomy, 111  
 —, Cicero's criticism of, 258  
 —, of the Gracchi, 255  
 —, in Greece, 168  
 —, of Jesus, 304  
 —, purpose of, 45  
 —, of Sophists, 69  
 —, visions of, 35  
 Social unrest, in Attica, 163  
 Socrates, on Social Democracy, 170  
 —, on Social reforms, 180  
 Solidarity, in Zoroastrian doctrine, 63  
 Solon, social reforms of, 155  
 Sophists, the, as Social Reformers, 169

# INDEX

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Soul, immortality of, doctrine among<br/>             Essenes, 124</p> <p>Sparta, Communism at, 159</p> <p>Spencer, his individualism, 203</p> <p>State, The, as conceived by Aristotle,<br/>             213<br/>         —, as imagined by Jesus, 273<br/>         —, Jewish, 68<br/>         —, Plato's idea on, 193, 194</p> <p>Stoicism, contradictions of, 232<br/>         —, philosophy of, 224</p><br><p>Theopomp, 163</p> <p>Trades, Cicero's criticism of, 249</p><br><p>Universalism, of Jesus, 297</p> <p>Usury, struggle against, in Greece,<br/>             149</p> | <p>Utopian ideas, of Plato, 190</p><br><p>Vaisya, The, 50</p> <p><i>Vendidad</i>, The, 63</p> <p>Voltaire, on the Gospels, 278</p><br><p>Wealth, sources of, in Greece, 150</p> <p><i>Wehr-Lehr und Nährstand</i>, 193</p> <p>Work, meaning of, 20<br/>         —, sanctity of, among Jews, 85,<br/>             87<br/>         —, intrinsic value of, 35</p> <p>Workers, free, in Greece, 153</p><br><p><i>Zend-Avesta</i>, The, 62</p> <p>Zeno, political ideas of, 229, 231, 232</p> <p>Zoroaster, teaching of, 62</p> |
|--|--|







212292

Ec.H

R2214k

Author Rappoport, Angelo Solomon

Title Labour, social reform and democracy. Vol.1.

University of Toronto  
Library

DO NOT  
REMOVE  
THE  
CARD  
FROM  
THIS  
POCKET

Acme Library Card Pocket  
Under Pat "Ref. Index File"  
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU



